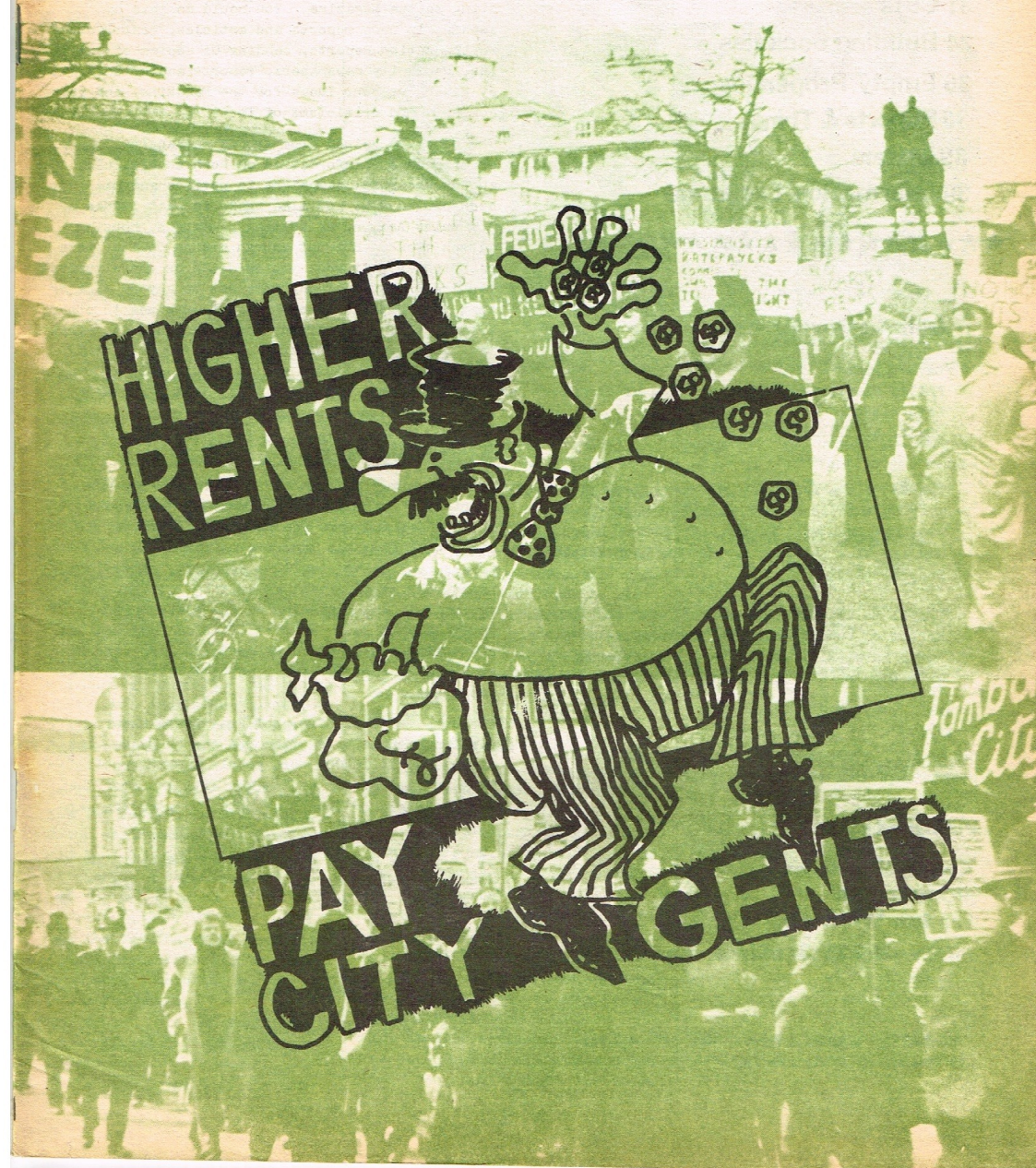


# COMMUNITY ACTION

No.26 June-July 1976

18p





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*It's your magazine  
~ so use it!*

This magazine exists to be used by community activists. There are two ways this can be done. Firstly, by those involved in campaigns contributing to the Magazine. You could do this by sending in news reports and articles, contributing to the Action Reports, sending us copies of bulletins, community newspapers, reports and so on. And by giving us your ideas for the Magazine, and your comments and criticisms of it.

The benefits gained from groups exchanging experience and information on both successful and unsuccessful campaigns is obvious and has been proved time and time again in past issues of Community Action, eg heating campaigns, housing action areas. But not enough groups do it. It's easy to say that what you're doing or the situation you are in isn't of any interest to anyone else or that your experience can't be of much use to others because they will already know all about it. This is a load of old cobblers. With groups fighting so many crucial issues and with more cuts in public spending on the way it is vital that experience and information is shared.

### Reprint it!

The second way you can use the Magazine is by reprinting information, summaries or the whole of articles and news reports (as well as the cartoons!) from the Magazine in community newspapers, bulletins, leaflets, reports, etc. This is equally as important as writing for C/A, but again it is not happening on the scale that we would like it to. We don't exercise copyright for community groups, etc, but we would like a credit when all or part of news reports or articles are reprinted.

The June issue of Liverpool Free Press shows one way in which material from C/A can be used - and circulated to 10,000 more people in Liverpool. They summarised six of the key articles from the Action Report on Council Housing in a centre page spread.

So it can be done. As we said at the beginning, Community Action exists to be used - so use it.



# NEWS & VIEWS

## CARDIFF HEATING STRIKE & BURN-IN

More than 100 tenants from the Pentwyn Estate burnt their heating bills outside Cardiff City Hall two weeks ago after a march in protest at the defective council-run central heating system.

The tenants pay up to £4.76 a week for heating and hot water. Each quarter tenants receive a statement showing either an under or an overcharge. The surcharges and rebates are settled once a year. When the Council came to settle up, 291 people received bills of up to £50. Each one was estimated as the Council admits that the meters are "faulty". Initially, hundreds of tenants who had received bills swamped the heating centre complaining bitterly that they could not possibly have used the amount of water the Council estimated they had.

### Tenants Organise

As a result, deals were struck with a number of tenants. Surcharges were suddenly turned into rebates depending on how militant a stance the individual took. This proves the Council claim that the estimates are "accurate, fair and reasonable" to be ludicrous.

At a well attended public meeting the Pentwyn Tenants Action Group was formed and a committee elected. The following demands were made to the council-

- \* the cancellation of all "arrears".
  - \* the setting up of an independent investigation into the heating and metering system - at Council expense.
- To support this the following line of action was unanimously agreed upon-
- 1 the non-payment of the est-



Pentwyn tenants burning their bills outside Cardiff town hall.

imated bills.

2 non-payment of the heating charge from the rent.

3 a march and burn-in of the bills.

To date, we estimate that over 150 tenants are withholding the heating charge from the rent, despite harassment from the rent collectors, and over 250 tenants are refusing to pay the estimated bills. Certain council employees on the estate have been warned off from participating in the heating charge strike.

### The right to heat

Pentwyn is a new estate and most of the tenants are aged under 35. Unemployment is high - about 25%. Those lucky enough to be in work are in the main low-wage earners. Many women are on social security as are a number of pensioners. Everyone waited an average of 4 years to be rehoused by the council, some had to live in the council hostels and bed and breakfast establishments. Some tenants are frightened to join in the heating strike for the fear of the consequences - they argue that they had to fight for their

home and cannot contemplate

being evicted. Others are saying, yes we had to fight to get housed - now we have to continue the fight for the right to heat.

### Council rubbish tip

The estate itself is like a rubbish tip, with piles of earth, glass and stones littering the streets. The streets have not been cleaned since the first tenants moved in - 16 months ago. There is one phone box and the nearest shop is a 15 minute walk away. Two nurseries planned for the area have been scrapped as part of the cuts - though there are around 600 under 5s on the estate.

Action group chairman, Terry James stressed the need for the tenants to get organised, pointing out that rents will rise by £3 in the next two years.

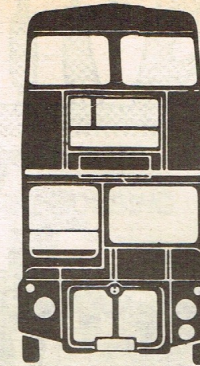
A meeting with the Council has been arranged and we are adamant that we will win our demands.

Terry James, Pentwyn Tenants Action Group, 51 Bryn Celyn, Cardiff.



## BRADFORD JOINT ACTION OF BUS SERVICES

The Transport and General Workers Union recently approached the Joint Committee of Tenants Associations in Bradford to ask for their co-operation in combating assaults on the bus crews by helping to identify the culprits and be witnesses. The tenants groups replied that if they were to co-operate, then there were many other issues which should be tackled.



Consequently, a working committee has been set up consisting of representatives from the TGWU, the bus crews and the Tenants Associations. The Committee will examine not only the attacks on crews but also bus services, their timing and reliability and bus fares.

More cuts in services are threatened. Many estates are on the outskirts of the city, and with the possibility of services to these areas being drastically cut or stopped altogether after 6pm, action is needed to prevent tenants being marooned or relying

on taxis, if they could afford them. Luke Kearns, Joint Committee of Tenants Associations, 9 Collinfield Rise, Woodside, Bradford BD6 2SL (0274-673565).

## WITHAM DISTRICT HEATING & CLORIUS METERS THROWN OUT

Humber Road Tenants Association has won its battle to have the District Heating Scheme and Clorius Meters both scrapped on the estate.

Braintree District Council have agreed to install individual gas boilers in every dwelling so tenants have complete control over fuel consumption and costs.

The campaign was helped by information from Longsight Tenants Association, Manchester, involved in a similar struggle. The final straw in the campaign against the Clorius-built system came when the council sent out heating surcharges of £20-£100 per

tenant after a winter of complete breakdowns, serious leakages and burst pipes. The system cost £107,000 to install, and was becoming a danger to people living on the estate.

We hope to include a full report from Humber Road T.A. on this great success in the next issue.

Contact: Mrs M Phillips, 12 Medway Ave, Witham, Essex.

## NOTTINGHAM WATCH OUT ... INSPECTOR BARRY'S ABOUT!

New Basford Residents Association campaigned for improvement and lost at the Public Inquiry.

It's another example to show that you can't rely on public inquiries to result in fair and reasonable decisions. The Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment (DoE) has just confirmed the New Basford Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

The CPO included about 300 houses plus several shops and workshops, spread over 16 different street blocks scattered throughout New Basford. There was no disagreement that some housing had to be cleared. But the New Basford Residents Association (NBRA) still maintains

that about half the houses are improvable and that the loss of shops and workshops will seriously reduce local facilities and cause unnecessary unemployment. Their campaign included detailed evidence for the public inquiry (see Information Exchange C/A 21).

### Short feet watch out

The public inquiry itself, held in July 1975, went fairly well from the residents point of view - and certainly gave no indication of what was to come.

In his report, the Inspector (RE Barry) gives the impression that he was never really interested in the possibility of improvement, although he refers to the relevant circulars to show that it had been 'fully considered'. The report talks of internal stairs being 'for people with short feet', of houses with front doors opening directly from the street into living rooms being totally unsuitable for improvement (hundreds of such houses have been improved all over the country). Clearance in one part is justified by arguing that a private developer would knock the houses down and build semi-detached houses.

### Council too generous!

The evidence of the Nottingham Community Relations Housing Association, who wanted to

## help!

We are desperate to solve our heating problem! Would any tenants association which has had problems with "FLEXEL" ceiling heating system, please contact: Saltram Tenants Association, Mrs Wonnacott, 64 Saltram Close, Colsterworth Rd., London N15 Tel: 01-808-1502.





"The clearance areas themselves are composed of run down structures street by street, gaunt spectres from the past, old sombre artisan cottages or dwellings that long ago have outlived any former pride they may have held" (the Inspector's Report)

improve a terrace of houses they owned, and whose architect considered this could be done at reasonable cost, was dismissed as 'optimistic willingness'. The inspector went further, saying that the council could be criticised for its 'spirit of generosity' in having left some groups of houses out of the CPO.

The inspector's report was simply rubber stamped by the Secretary of State, who only added a note expressing concern at the loss of workshops - and this eight months after the report was finished. The New Basford CPO shows that the existing system, in particular the examination of the inspector's report by the Secretary of State, cannot be relied upon as a means of implementing national policies.

### Knock 'em down

It shows that the 'knock 'em down' mentality still prevails both within the Inspectorate dealing with public inquiries and the DoE. If you get the same inspector, R.E. Barry, at your public inquiry, then be prepared!

The DoE are preparing a report for local authorities on "Gradual Renewal" and this should contain clear criteria on the social and economic issues which must be taken into account in assessing which houses should be improved and which

ones cleared

It must be made mandatory for authorities to do this assessment in every case and to make the figures, arguments and conclusions for and against improvement and clearance freely available to residents.

New Basford Residents Association, 74 North Gate, Nottingham (0602-75414)

## BRENT TENANTS & WORKERS CAMPAIGN FOR CROSSINGS

The campaign by Brent Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations for safe

crossing points on the 2 mile stretch of the North Circular Road through Brent is an example of the need for community action to be joint action by workers and residents.

### Divides facilitates

There are houses, shops and offices on both sides of the road and a school, playing fields, playgrounds, a library and factories on the Eastbound carriageway. In the immediate vicinity of this stretch there is a shopping centre, a geriatric hospital, four primary schools, a nursery school, a large comprehensive school, and school

playing fields whose only access is from the North Circular Road.

### Heavy traffic

In November 1975 the road was widened, making it a 6 lane dual carriageway. Over 40,000 vehicles use this stretch of the road each day. Between November 1975 and May 1976 there were 3 accidents fatal to pedestrians.

The Federation, supported by the AUEW(TASS) branch at a local factory, many of whose workers have to negotiate the road each day is campaigning for:

- \* 2 footbridges over the road
- \* a pedestrian phase in the traffic lights
- \* the barrier in the central

## STOP THE SALE OF COUNCIL HOUSES

What are the real facts about the sale of council houses? What are the financial, political and social reasons why council housing should not be sold off.

SCAT, in conjunction with other groups, is currently preparing a pamphlet on the sale of council houses, for tenants and workers. It will be comprehensive but cheap, and will be available at bulk rates in late July/early August.

We want your help. Is your council already selling or considering selling off council houses? Has it done so in the past? Does it build for sale? Please write or phone us as soon as possible if you can help with this information, and/or you have ideas as to what should be included in the pamphlet.

Shelter Community Action Team, 159 Cleveland St, London W1  
(01-387 1138)



reservation to be strenth-  
ened.  
The Woodheyas Bridge and Gre-  
sham Road Tenants and Resid-  
ents Association brought the  
issue to the attention of the  
Brent Federation in November



1975 and they have taken up  
the campaign in a number of  
ways, including pressure on  
Brent council to support their  
aims and on the Department of  
the Environment to implement  
them.

The local MP and a number of  
councillors are supporting  
the campaign. Over 1000 sig-  
natures were collected by res-  
idents and by local workers  
to a petition which was pres-  
ented to the House of Commons  
by Laurie Pavitt, the local  
MP, the AUEW (TASS) convener  
from the Brent Ascot factory,  
Irene Bannon from the Feder-  
ation and a local councillor.  
The Federation has produced  
a report 'A Pedestrian Night-  
mare' to present their case  
to the DoE. With 23 photos  
and statistics and facts  
backing up the demands, the  
report slams the DoE and  
Brent Council for their in-  
difference to the safety of  
Brent residents.

More information from Marion  
Hood, Brent Federation, 36  
Gresham Road, London NW10  
tel. 01-459-3834.

## BRADFORD CRUSHERS SQUASHED

Birklands Council estate  
is one of the oldest  
estates in Bradford. It  
also happend to be one of  
the smallest. But when  
they get their backs up,  
there's no holding them!

Because it was so badly  
neglected by the council  
there was considerable  
difficulty at first in  
forming a Tenants Assoc-  
iation. But once they got  
the bit between their teeth  
and they were shown what  
unity and solidarity could  
do, things began to improve.  
Birklands now have a  
thriving association, a play  
area and money in the bank  
for a community centre.

### Tenants' eye-opener

It all began in mid-1975  
when the tenants discovered  
that a scrap company,  
(Tanks and Drums) was to  
build a car shredding plant  
right on their door step.  
This was just too much.  
Something now would have  
to be done. A meeting was  
called. News got around

about the plant, and there  
was a full house at the  
meeting. It was decided  
to do a survey of all  
residents, traders, bus-  
iness people in the area.  
The support was tremendous.

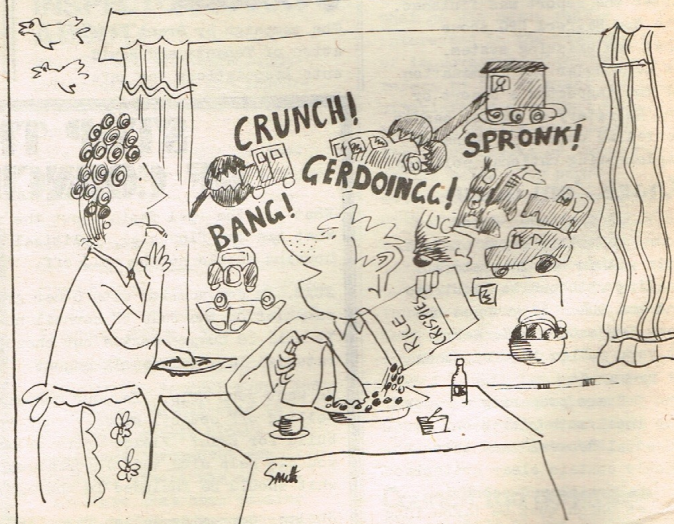
'Tanks and Drums' then  
offered to take represent-  
atives of Birklands to  
view a similar shredding  
plant at Rotherham and  
the company provided  
transport and equipment  
to measure the extent of  
the noise. This visit was  
a real eye-opener for  
Birklands tenants.

### Company tries again ...

For the first time, they  
realised the amount of  
noise, dust, danger, traffic  
congestion, etc,

All this was reported at  
the quarterly meeting of the  
Bradford Joint Tenants, who  
put the full weight of their  
organisation behind Birklands.

Another visit was arranged,  
this time to a shredding plant  
in London. Again transport  
and equipment was provided by  
'Tanks and Drums'. After  
this visit to London, Birkland  
tenants were in possession of  
all the facts and a public



"ERE, HUM - I THOUGHT THEY WAS SUPPOSED TO GO 'SNAP, CRACKLE, POP'?"



meeting was called. Local councillors, residents, shopkeepers, etc, and the representatives of the shredding plant, turned up.

This time, Birklands tenants had all the arguments, questions and answers ready. They had done their homework, and this time the wool couldn't be pulled over their eyes. The car shredding representatives hadn't a leg to stand on.

### ... and fails !

After that meeting the Joint Committee of Tenants, and Birklands, sent letters of protest to Bradford Council and Development Control, and at their meeting on April 7th they refused the application for permission to build the car-crushing plant.

There is a lesson for all tenants in this fight:-

- (i) unity means strength
- (ii) don't be afraid to enlist support from all sources in your area
- (iii) do your home-work.

Luke Kearns, Bradford  
Joint Committee, 9  
Collingfield Rise,  
Woodside, Bradford.



Police camera crews again turned up in force for the May 26 Unemployment March from Tower Hill. Recently they have also been photographed whilst filming such widely different events as the protests against the welcome Callaghan gave to the fascist Brazilian President Geisel and a local march by women and children in Bletchley, Buckinghamshire. Why do they need these films? "For the training of police officers" is the official reply. Photos: thanks to "Flash Red".



## LONDON

### HOME OFFICE AXES C.D.P. INFORMATION UNIT

It now seems certain that the Community Development Project Central Information and Intelligence Unit will close down at the end of September, although several charities and trusts have been approached for help. The history of the Unit which has acted to coordinate the output of the individual projects in the form of inter-project publications, has been very troubled.

### Short reprieve

In January of this year the Home Office abruptly announced that the grant for the Unit was to cease at the end of April although senior civil servants had assured

the Unit's staff that the Unit would continue at least to the end of the National experiment in September 1977 and probably longer. After a considerable political campaign this decision was reversed but it is now clear that although a battle had been won the war had been lost, for the reprieve was only for six months.

### Political reasons

An ASTMS sponsored delegation of MPs then had a meeting with Brynmor John the Minister responsible for CDP to try and fight the September closure but with no success. Other MPs, trade unionists and academics have also intervened but again with no success.

Although the reason given by Roy Jenkins when the April closure was announced was the need to cut public expendit-

ure, when it was shown that the savings would be negligible this argument was dropped and the letter from Brynmor John to the Assistant General Secretary of ASTMS confirming the closure makes no mention of any savings.

There can be no doubt that the real reason for the closure is political and not economic. The Central Unit has made possible the production of GDP reports which are critical of the Labour Government on a number of issues, notably on council housing and on the effects of the public expenditure cuts on working-class families. Rather than try to answer the charges or to disprove them, the right wing Ministers in the Home Office find it easier to close the Unit thus ensuring that no more critical reports based



on the related experiences of the Projects see the light of day. For its own part, the Unit will seek to ensure the publication of as many further publications as it can. Already a document on Housing Finance is at the printers and reports are in preparation on Action Strategies in CDP; Employment and Industry in CDP areas; a history of the whole Poverty Programme and on the CDP and Legal Issues.

### Hiding the real facts

With the closure of the Unit there will be no final accounts or descriptions of the CDP experience carried out by CDP workers themselves and it will be interesting to see what plans the Home Office have for producing a final account of the most expensive anti-poverty experiment yet devised by Government. What seems most likely is that one or more academics from the comfort of some ivory tower will be commissioned to produce a piece of work that will not be embarrassing to Government. Readers of Community Action should watch out for it.

Mike Cantor, C.D.P. Information Unit, 5 Tavistock Place, London WC1, Tel. 01-387 5126.

## GLASGOW ANTI-DAMPNESS TENANTS GO ON RENT STRIKE

The hot weather hasn't deterred the tenants of the Hutchesontown and Laurieston Anti-Dampness Campaign in their fight for remedial work on their flats, and compensation for damage to their health and belongings caused by dampness.

### Tenants needn't pay

There have been several important developments since the news item in the last issue of C/A (on page 6). Firstly, about forty tenants have now gone on rent strike in protest against the Council's failure to carry

out repairs. The rent strike follows an important case in the Small Debt Court, in which the Council withdrew at the last minute from taking action against a tenant who was withholding his rent because of the effects of condensation. The Sheriff of the court granted a 'Decree of Absolvitor', which absolved the tenant from the responsibility to pay any rent until repairs are done. This decision also puts the responsibility for repairs squarely on the shoulders of the Council. A second case on arrears didn't even get as far as the courtroom, but another Decree was granted.

recommending 12 tenants' homes, but only when the Council gives them in writing the terms of reference for this investigation. The tenants are also negotiating for their own technical advisor to be involved in the survey.

Work is also continuing on the preparation of court cases on the issue of compensation for the damage caused by dampness.

Thanks to: Hutchesontown and Laurieston Tenants Associations  
c/o Laurieston Information Centre  
80 Stirlingfauld Place, Glasgow  
G5 9BX. Tel 041 429 3254



The Campaign committee prepared a standard rent strike letter for individual tenants to send to the Council, and has said that if the tenants bank the rent they are withholding, then the Dampness Campaign will support and represent tenants in court if the Council decides to prosecute for arrears. However, this is very unlikely because of the two Decrees granted so far.

### Council blandness

Secondly, the Council finally produced a short and bland report on its own investigation into the dampness problem. It contains no medical, technical or other detailed information, and still implies that the dampness is the fault of the tenants for leading normal lives in their homes! The Council now wants to carry out a detailed technical investigation of 12 homes, using independent building experts who will recommend what remedial work is necessary. The Campaign committee have agreed to co-operate in this investigation by

## SUNDERLAND BUILDING COOPERATIVE 3 YEARS ON

Sunderlandia Ltd was promoted with the intention of creating a workers controlled building cooperative in 1973 (see C/A no.9). After 3 years of operation it is worth looking back to see how those intentions have matched up to reality. Three years of 'run away' inflation, a reduction in the level of improvement grants in Development Areas, public expenditure cuts generally and the deepest recession in the building industry since the '30s have taken their toll on Sunderlandia's commercial viability. However it must be admitted that the problems of Sunderlandia's progress are not wholly connected with external factors.



## Rehab work

Work started as intended on 75% Grant housing improvement work, mainly for owner occupiers, though in some cases for private landlords. This was quickly followed with a £90,000 plus rehabilitation contract for Durham Housing Association. However this could not satisfy our demand for work and was supplemented first by the rehabilitation work on a vicarage for the Durham Diocese and later with the building of three new vicarages.

## Need for profit

The subsequent pattern of production that has emerged is that our resources are equally split between new construction and improvement and maintenance work. Whether or not this is socially desirable has never been a debated issue. On the one hand we need to get work. On the other hand there is a feeling amongst the tradesman that new building work is easier, cleaner and more profitable than rehabilitation. At the moment we are developing a site with eleven houses for speculative building. Well designed and reasonably priced they should yield a good profit providing we can execute it efficiently and thus recoup some of our accumulated losses.

Most of our resources are directed at this project at the moment although we are shortly to begin a fairly large improvement programme in Newcastle. Accumulated losses have resulted from inefficiency and poorly managed contracts as much as, if not more than, from a shortage of work. The resulting erosion of our capital base has created tremendous cash flow problems.

## Internal problems

One is bound therefore to look at the internal problems for the source of Sunderlandia's struggle. Clause 10 of the company's preamble

to the Articles of Association states: "An enterprise should work for the eventual disappearance of the distinction between management and non-management. But given present realities it would be a deception to pretend that the distinction does not exist and the organisation of an enterprise must take it into account."

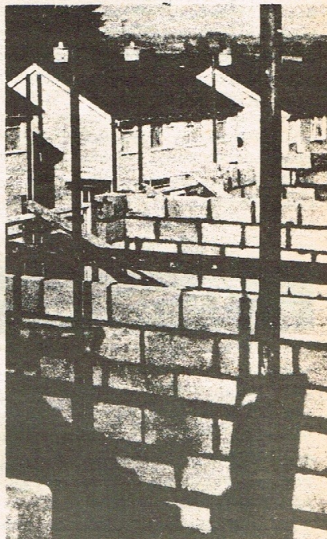
The company's Articles of Association counterbalance this in clause 84 (which is legally binding in civil law at least) in stating: "The company must spend a sum equivalent to not less than 5% of total wage expenditure on the education of members and other employees and at least half of that expenditure must be on non-technical education. Agreement of the trade unions must be sought on the education programme."

## Workers control

Neither of these two statements, one of intent, the other a commitment, have been taken seriously. There is no formal management structure that would be recognisable. On the other hand no serious attempt has been made to enable ordinary working men to acquire the skills of management and thereby to develop a workers controlled organisation. The result has been that Sunderlandia operates in a leadership vacuum. The impact of this situation has resulted in a number of workers leaving in frustration and others being dismissed or made redundant as a result of a series of panic measures to survive. Of the original 13 adults starting with the company, excepting the promoters, there is only one left. Of the thirty odd apprentices we started with there are only 10 left, two of whom have 'graduated' to tradesman and two transferred to labouring duties. The concept of labouring being shared has completely fallen by the wayside and of the 16 adults currently employed 4 are exclusively

labourers, making a total of 6 out of 26 employees. At the other end of the spectrum, there are four in totally administrative or management roles.

Fortunately there are one or two individuals who are trying to get the project back to its original aims. In recent months the company has consistently returned at least a break-even performance. Maybe if we begin to make a profit it will stimulate interest and debate. Maybe Sunderlandia's eventual success will require a considerable period of hardline entrepreneurial management. It remains an exciting struggle.



Finally I must emphasise that this is rather a personal view although I think it would be shared. Others in the company would acknowledge the points I make, but may choose to give them different emphasis.

Pete Smith, 144 Canon Cockin Street, Wendon, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear.

**Editorial note:** This article raises serious questions about the purpose of workers cooperatives - the way they are run and their aims. Readers comments welcomed.



# Patient Community Health

Community Health Councils (CHC) were set up by the state when the National Health Service (NHS) was re-organised in April 1974. They are supposed to give the public a bigger say in the running of the NHS, or as the circular put it, "To provide a new means of representing the local community's interest in the health service."

There are 229 CHCs in England and Wales, one for each health district. Sometimes a health district matches existing local authority boundaries but in many cases, especially in London, they have boundaries which relate to the traditional hospital groupings rather than a recognised community.

This has given rise to problems for CHCs in relating to these artificial communities. Each CHC has between 18 and 30 members, half appointed directly by local authorities, a third by voluntary organisations and the rest by the Regional Health Authority.

## Tenants reps

The Regional Health Authority nominations are supposed to ensure that the CHC represents a fair balance of local interests and has to include a representative from the local Trades Council. Under this category they should be giving places to womens' groups, and immigrant groups, but not all RHAs see it this way and often they have appointed the usual brigade - i.e. middle class ladies in flowered hats.

In some instances local authorities such as the London Borough of Wandsworth have given all their nominations to grass roots organisations such as tenants associations, Claimants Unions, Shelter, as they felt that the Local Authority had sufficient representation at a higher level of the health service. Community groups could press their local authorities to follow this example.

CHC members were appointed for two or four year periods and half the original membership are due to retire in December 1976, when re-nominations will take place. Regional Health Authorities are currently drawing up a list of suitable organisations to invite them to apply for the voluntary organisation places.

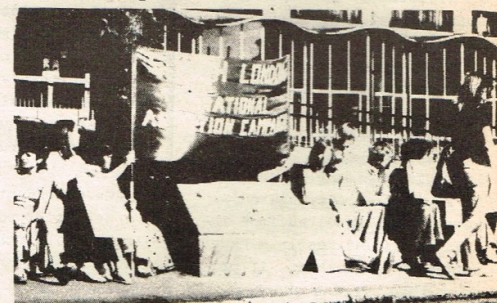
INTERESTED COMMUNITY GROUPS LIKE TENANTS

ASSOCIATIONS AND WOMENS GROUPS SHOULD MAKE SURE THAT THEY ARE INCLUDED ON THIS LIST BY WRITING TO THE REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY BY THE END OF AUGUST.

Each Council has a full-time secretary appointed by and responsible to the CHC members but paid and employed by the Regional Health Authority from which Councils' get their budgets. Many have opted to set themselves up in high street shops and run a walk-in advice centre. Others are hidden away in small offices in local hospitals. The CHCs functions can broadly be separated into the following headings:-

## Dealing with complaints

Very often people don't know where to go for the health services they need. It is the CHCs job to find out and pass on that information and to help people make complaints. CHCs are not allowed to investigate complaints but they can tell people what their rights are and what they are entitled to under the NHS. They can also help the individual present a complaint in the best way and ensure it gets a fair hearing.



It is important to remember that if an individual complains about a G.P., Optician, Dentist or Chemist, it must be done within 8 weeks of the incident or the bureaucracy as represented by the local Family Practitioner Committee will rule it out of time.

Doctors themselves investigate complaints regarding other doctors. It works similarly to the system concerning complaints against



# Power Councils in action

the police. If you want to complain about the hospital service you should contact your local CHC or write to the Hospital Secretary with a copy to the CHC.

Many CHCs are trying to monitor complaints to see how they are dealt with and to assess whether or not patients get a satisfactory reply, so copy your complaint to the Secretary and ask in your letter for a copy of the reply to be sent to the CHC.

If you are not satisfied with the reply the CHC will help you to make a formal complaint to the Health Service Commissioner. However, the catch 22 is that he is only allowed to look at complaints which do not involve questioning clinical judgement. Once again, patients cannot challenge the power of the medical bureaucracy.

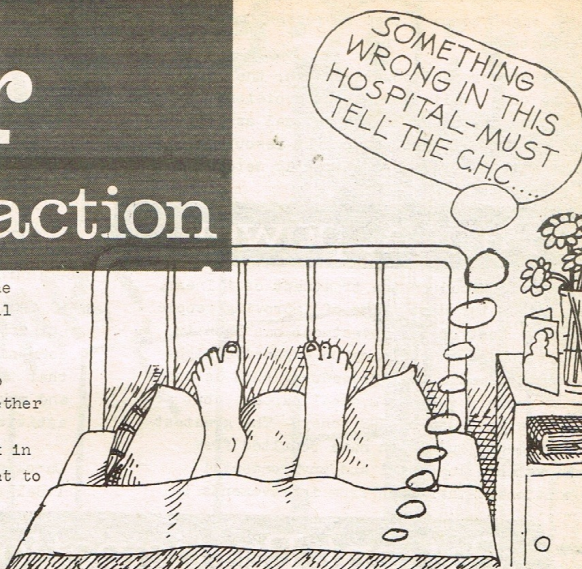
## Fighting closures

The Community Health Council must be consulted about any important decisions which will affect people who live in its district. If the Health Authorities want to close a hospital, for example, or if they want to stop giving a particular service, they must ask the CHC. If the CHC disagrees with the Health Authorities' proposals, it has to put forward alternative proposals to the Secretary of State who has the final say.

It's early days yet to see how this power will work out in practice, but if the CHC is to be effective in opposing closures and cuts in services, it cannot do this in isolation. It must join together with the community as represented by trade unions, community groups, women's groups, tenants associations, and the local labour movement to fight for a health service which meets the needs of local working people. This is going to be particularly important in the immediate future as we see the effects of existing cutbacks in resources and the threat of further cuts in public spending.

## Improving services

In the same way the CHC is asked about the way in which money should be spent in the health services and how priorities outlined in Government White Papers should be met. It is the duty of the CHC with the help of the community to make



sure that money is spent on the things which will most benefit the community and the patient and to press for inadequate services to be improved.

However, in many ways this is a nonsense, as far too often the CHC is consulted at too late a stage to inject any real changes. Wandsworth and East Merton CHC has fought from the beginning for meaningful participation and refuses to be used as a rubber stamp. This has often brought them into conflict with the health authorities who are not used to having their view of participation challenged.

It is important to provide advice and information to health service users and indeed community health councils represent the first attempt to do this, but there are wider implications.

The health service is organised on the philosophy that "the doctor knows best". The CHCs can help to widen public debate on health and press for improvements in service. They could equally prove a smoke-screen of "public participation" in the run-down of the service if community groups

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don't fight to make them represent their interests.

With their present powers though, the role of the CHCs is limited. Most decisions remain in the hands of the medical establishment, while ultimate power over resources rests with a government currently determined to make cuts.

## Patient power

The NHS is based on the treatment of illness, but not on the best means of improving people's health. Most of its investment has been in hospitals and in building up expensive high-technology medicine. Procedures such as open-heart surgery further medical careers, but are they the best use of NHS money? The greatest improvements in health have resulted from improvements in social and environmental conditions rather than from improvements in

medical treatment.

Many people are beginning to question the way in which the health service is organised. They are beginning to question the philosophy that "the doctor knows best" and to widen public debate on health so that decisions to provide services can no longer be taken in an arbitrary fashion and in isolation from the needs of the 'client' group. In this way they can be a positive force for change in the NHS in the same way that the existence of Law Centres is beginning to force change in the legal profession.

30 individuals cannot represent a whole community, but if they can be seen to be working with local community and voluntary groups, there is hope that they will develop a 'health consciousness' and make health as vital an issue for community activists as race or housing.

Caroline Langridge, Wandsworth & E.Merton CHC,  
1 Balham Station Road, London SW12. 01-673-8820.

## Patient Participation

REPRINTED FROM 'BIG FLAME' JUNE 1976

ABERDERE in the South Wales valleys is an area where death rates are among the highest in Wales and England, and where more people are more often sick than in most parts of the country. At the same time health facilities are below average. Waiting lists are longer, hospitals are old and out of date. Over half the hospital facilities were built before World War One.

This is the background against which a new experiment in patient participation in health care is taking place. The idea is to involve patients in the running of a health centre, and at the same time to use it as a base to educate people about health and for fighting for better facilities.

A patients committee was set up around a new health centre in the middle of the town in September 1973. The centre has 10,000 patients and also includes a meeting hall. Dr. Alastair Wilson explains: 'The NHS does not belong to the doctors. It belongs to the people and it seems unreasonable that such an important social service should not involve patients in its running. We also knew that the doctors had a very limited experience about the pressures and conditions of people's lives. The impact that mining has on a miner's health is fairly well known: but what does a speed up on the line at the local Dunlop factory mean in health terms? We thought that if we understood the lives of patients we would understand the health risks better. And also the wide range of experience of people from different walks of life would help us set up an effective health care programme. We wanted to include their experiences as well as our basic medical knowledge.'

'They tell us about the problems that arise among different sections

of the population; physical strain of hard work; nervous strain of speed ups in industry, problems of poverty in old age; problems of isolation; and so on.'

### Professional barrier

The patients committee is made up of a miner, a local factory worker, a hotel receptionist, a teacher and several pensioners. Early meetings dealt with pretty basic things: the doctors' week-end rota arrangements, the surgery appointment system, parking facilities and the decorations. It took time for the committee members to get used to the idea of the meetings, and to break down the professional barrier between 'ordinary people' and the doctors. As one member of the committee said: 'It took us time to learn to speak to the doctors as equals. But now we've taken them off their pedestals and brought them down to earth.'

As the committee gained confidence, the areas it discussed broadened. It discussed poor abortion facilities in the area and James White's (Amendment) Bill on Abortion. It set up a series of open discussions on health questions; a women's only meeting on cancer of the uterus attracted 91 women; the talk ranged from, what does it mean if a woman starts bleeding to what to do if you find a lump on your breast. It is to be followed up by one on the menopause. Another discussion looked at the needs of old people in winter. The postman and the milkman were invited along to see how they could help.

### Rights

Gradually the committee began to expect greater accountability from the doctors; why wasn't one of them there to open the surgery on

time? 'we began to see how in many industrial areas levels of care are not high enough,' explains a member of the committee. 'There is a movement in the medical profession which says that patients shouldn't expect too much. We don't agree with this.'

'We want patients to have a greater expectation of levels of medical care. They should expect early diagnosis, quick and effective treatment and long term cures. At one meeting we discussed the difficulty of getting hold of a doctor on Saturday afternoons. It raised the question of whether the patient has the right to see a doctor when he or she thinks it's necessary. We say, yes, they do have that right.'

From this it was a natural step for the committee to begin to discuss the wider failings of the local health service. It asked, and got, the transport authority to subsidise the fares of patients travelling long distances to the only mental hospital in the area. It has also set up a screening service for everybody over 60. 'We wanted to pick up abnormalities before people were forced to retire and before they became a problem,' explains Alastair Wilson. 'We sent a letter to everyone over 60. Now, as a matter of course, everybody gets a letter from us on their sixtieth birthday. This is particularly important in an area where many people's work has taken a heavy toll on their health during their working lives.'

### Scratching the surface

The patients committee is only beginning to scratch the surface of what could be done. It is helped by the local doctors who are members of the Socialist Medicine Association. But it has shown what can be done when people are given an opportunity to question the health service that is handed down to them and can organise for a health service they deserve.



# ACTION REPORT

# COUNCIL HOUSING

FINAL PART

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- \* Myths & Facts
- \* Council Construction
- \* Tenants Action



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- Who gets housed
- Who pays & who profits - rents, rates & subsidies
- Equity sharing - a new attack
- Tenants control



IN ISSUE NO. 24

- Fight the new attack
- Its always been a struggle
- The housing market: big business & you
- Why council housing is important today
- Community facilities: places to meet, play & relax



## *The best means of defence is ATTACK!*

This Action Report has been written for groups up and down the country to USE in the fight to improve and expand council housing.

We've attempted a FULL EXPLANATION OF THE FACTS

- on finance
- on the cost of new building
- on where rent money really goes
- on the housing shortage
- on tenants' lack of rights

... because the attack on council housing leaves no stone unturned.

★ The opponents of council housing call for the SALE of council houses, and more "equity-sharing" schemes.

WE HAVE SHOWN how this will destroy the whole basis of public housing finance and rent pooling.

★ The critics say the days of the national housing shortage are past. They call for an end to all council house building.

WE SHOW how council housing offers the ONLY chance for a decent home for thousands of working class families and for the homeless and badly housed families.

★ The Government says rents must go up - "we must all tighten our belts"

WE SHOW how Higher Rents Pay City Gents - 62p in every £1 rent goes to pay off the interest charges on council loans from the City for housing.

The housing cuts and the attack on council housing affect us all. FIGHT BACK - USE THE ACTION REPORT



# THE HOUSING LOBBY

WHO ARE THE ORGANISATIONS leading the attack on council housing? The "Housing Lobby" includes the CBI, the Building Societies Association, City Financiers and the National Federation of Building Trades Employers. These are heavily financed groups with their own full time staff and high level contact with civil servants and Ministers. Their links with government are especially exploited during lobbying over new housing legislation. Large amounts of research information and money are channelled into propaganda campaigns over key issues such as mortgage policies, the sale of council housing, direct labour and rent control.

## City Finance and Housing

Financial and industrial lobby groups rarely campaign on housing alone. The CBI, Pension Fund and Insurance Company associations and the banks concentrate on more general aspects of the economy. But in their journals and publications certain aspects of the housing question come up time and again.

- \* they argue that public expenditure, of which council housing takes a large share, "diverts resources from the private sector and puts a special burden on industry and commerce because they must bear the burden (see the CBI paper 'Views on Public Expenditure', September 1975)



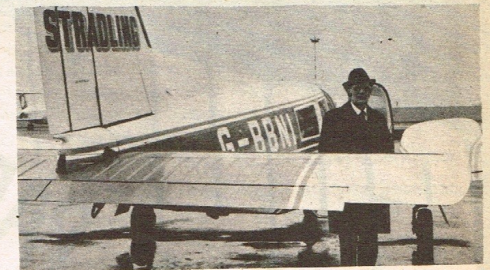
Annual meeting of the NFEBE. On the Agenda: The Fight Against Direct Works Departments.

- \* the Banks make much of the lack of stability in the housing finance market. They call for measures which will smooth out the boom and slump cycles in house building and the irregularities in the flow of mortgage funds.

- \* they attack direct labour departments because "it is unfair competition".

## The CBI

It is worth looking more closely at the largest of these pressure groups, the CBI. This was formed in 1965 and now has a membership of 13,000 individual companies and 200 trade associations. The CBI claims that most of the top 1000 UK companies are members. 88% of the membership consists of industrial companies and 7% from finance and



"I'm Henry - Fly Me!" Henry Stradling, Vice-President of Master Builders Federation, arrives in Newcastle for a conference.

commerce. There is a full time staff of 400, 10 regional offices and an office in Brussels. Although the CBI has not produced specific reports on housing, it regularly attacks public expenditure and state intervention. Its main aims are "To uphold the market system and the profit motive that sustains it and to bring home to the public at large that no other system offers comparable opportunities for growth with such freedom of choice and action for the individual".

## Building Societies

The most powerful member of the housing lobby is the Building Societies Association, with 400 member societies.

The BSA national organisation has a press department and a research department to support their pressure group activities with the Government. Their strongest link with the Government is through the 'Joint Advisory Committee on Building Society Mortgage Finance'. The JAC was set up in October 1975 and is made up of 7 representatives from the BSA national council, from the Treasury, the Bank of England, the Department of the Environment (DoE) and the Registrar of Friendly Societies.

The societies have £2000 million invested in 'gilt edge securities' with the Government. This alone gives them economic power in a big way. The JAC meets in private every month, does not publish minutes, agendas, reports, nor does its Technical Sub-Committee. These things are not considered 'appropriate for public consumption' according to the DoE.

## Slanted Report

Although the JAC is set up to regulate the private housing market, keep a watch on prices and keep a steady hand on mortgage lending, in fact it is a forum for the BSA to press the Government to support its policies on home ownership. So they have discussed the BSA's report to the Government's



Housing Finance Review Advisory Group. This slanted report, full of distortions and inaccuracies, concluded that:

- ★ 'councils should encourage tenants to move out and buy their own homes, thus freeing homes for those who really need council accommodation'.
- ★ 'even if tax relief is considered to be a subsidy (which the societies do not) owner occupiers receive less support from public funds than council tenants'.

This report was widely circulated to MPs and journalists. It was not just another report; it was used by the press as 'source material' for anti-council housing features on a wide scale.

## Building Bosses

The National Federation of Building Trades Employers (NFBTE) has 13,000 members ranging from Wimpeys and Wates to the small local builders. The NFBTE is a major national organisation, with 400 full-time workers at headquarters and in the regions. The Federation operates at the highest levels, representing builders in negotiations with Ministers, the Government departments and the Unions. Its headquarters has 9 departments including Parliamentary Liaison, Public Relations and Publications/Conferences. Their last AGM was held in Majorca. Staff are responsible to the National Council which has set up several key policy committees. Ernest Smith, the President, is also a member of the extreme right wing National Association for Freedom (see C/A no.23,p.40).

## Influence

The NFBTE draws its strength from over 200 local and regional associations. And it exerts its influence throughout the construction field and beyond, from the Minister of Housing and Construction, the National Consultative Council, Government Working Groups, and the CBI, to the British Roads Federation.

## 'Let US Profit'

The top 100 construction firms have set up their own organisation within the NFBTE - the National Contractors Group (NCG). The NCG has a budget of £500,000 a year from members' subscriptions:

- ★ this year the NCG has largely funded the Federation's 'Let Us Build' campaign against Direct Works Departments. The growth of direct works by councils has been so successful that it is seen as a threat not just to small firms but to national contractors like Taylor Woodrow and Wates.

The 'Let Us Build' campaign has successfully defeated attempts by the Greater London Council and West Midlands County Council to extend the powers of their direct labour departments through Government Bills. A Bill by Tyne and Wear to enable the council to carry out commercial works, buy shares in private builders and to build for other councils has been radically amended in the House of Lords. The NFBTE chalked up these notable achievements by



President Ernest Smith

meeting Opposition M.P.'s and by preparing long reports backing up their case.

The CBI played a prominent part in supporting the campaign in Westminster against the GLC and West Midlands Bills.

## House Builders Federation

The House Builders Federation (HBF) is affiliated to the NFBTE and has 4000 members - a private housebuilder joins the NFBTE and automatically becomes a member of the HBF.

Having the housebuilders separately organised gives them a stronger voice with the Government. Over the last year the HBF has held 8 meetings with Freeson, Crosland and Silkin. It has sent papers to the Housing Finance Review as did the Building Societies. It maintains contact with MPs with an interest in housing and land. It meets the BSA every 3 months - but has so far failed to get on their Joint Advisory Committee.

The HBF ran the NFBTE's campaign against the Community Land Act. A separate committee was set up and put down 250 amendments to the Bill itself, winning many concessions. The HBF has its own journal, 'Housebuilder' and the NFBTE publishes 'National Builder'. Read a copy in your local library.

## Master Builders

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) has 21,000 members - mainly the small and medium-size firms and specialist contractors like electricians. The FMB has several hundred local branches and 9 regional branches. It has a National Council, with various committees like the Housing Study Group. The FMB is less powerful than the NFBTE, but it has run the same kinds of campaigns

- ★ it produced a report proposing ways to increase home ownership and then met representatives from the Government's Housing Finance Review.
- ★ at local and regional level and throughout the FMB monthly journal 'Master Builder' they have attacked council direct works departments as 'unfair competition' and being less efficient than private firms. In Swansea the FMB ran a press and radio campaign against a proposed increase in the council's direct works dept.

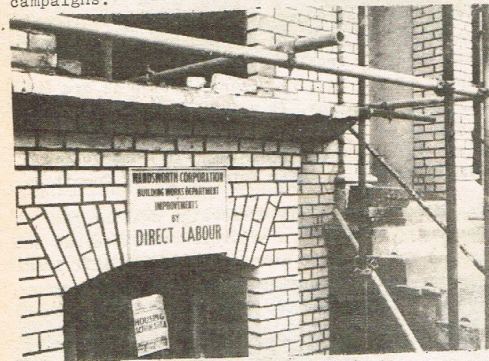
NATIONALLY the Housing Lobby is impressively organised. The Lobby extends well beyond the builders and financiers into the many national 'Professional' associations.



# DIRECT WORKS

Council building departments, or direct labour organisations (DLOs for short), offer the chance to solve some of the problems of council house construction that we have looked at in previous sections. They can also help to extend public ownership in the notoriously exploitative building industry.

In spite of the instability, appalling safety record and high profitability of much of the private construction industry, campaigns to expand DLOs have aroused only sporadic support from the labour movement. This is even more surprising because of the great leverage that public bodies have within the industry - half of all building industry output is for public authorities. The construction industry remains firmly in private hands, supported by one of private industry's best coordinated defence campaigns.



## Limits imposed

Most DLOs are firmly tied to the unprofitable sectors of the industry - routine repairs and maintenance and small scale improvement contracts. Of the 170,000 building workers in the municipal sector only 27,000 are employed on new construction. Only 4% of new construction for public bodies is carried out by the municipal sector. An even smaller proportion of new council housing is built publicly - 3%.

Clearly there is great scope for extending the role of DLOs. Practical as well as ideological arguments for doing so are strong.

- ★ DLOs can help counteract fluctuations in building employment. The dominance of small firms and casual labour means workers are especially vulnerable to lay-offs during recessions. Over 200,000 of the 1,300,000 currently unemployed in the UK are building workers.
- ★ Eliminating private industry profit (eg. by redistribution of any surplus to training and better benefits) can result in significant cost saving and thus lower rents for tenants.

- ★ DLOs offer better working conditions and safety conditions - typically accident rates are well below private industry averages. DLOs also provide better long service benefits and higher pensions than the private sector.
- ★ The bigger DLOs provide large scale apprenticeship schemes. Manchester DLO - third largest in the country - spends £600,000 a year training 630 apprentices. This is more than the combined total of all other building apprenticeships in Greater Manchester.

## Opposition from private builders

DLOs operate under tight restrictions. They are not allowed to tender for work outside their own local authority area or for private clients, for example. This makes it difficult to maintain a steady flow of work - the GLC, West Midland and Tyne/Wear counties all recently submitted local Bills which included proposals to widen the scope of DLO operations. These sections were all defeated in the Commons after building industry opposition marshalled by the National Federation of Building Trade Employers (which claimed success after "a long and painstaking" campaign "against the aggrandisement of DLOs") (see p.15).

Opposition to DLOs centres on two arguments:

- ★ DLOs have an unfair advantage because of their special position within the Council.
- ★ DLO accounting procedures conceal hidden rate subsidies which 'featherbed' them from competition. This makes them inherently inefficient. (For example DLO opponents say that work done by council architects is not included when DLOs tender for a job.)

In fact Manchester's record shows that DLOs are not inherently inefficient - their productivity rate of 1.33 houses per man year is 33% higher than the industry average. There are however some important reforms needed in organisation and accounting procedures so that DLO operations are clearly and publicly accountable - for example councils should have separate direct works committees and DLO financial statements should be separated from other departments.

## Fight for expansion

Expansion of DLOs should therefore be a key demand by tenants and workers. Construction is an important link in the council housing chain and must be brought into public control, otherwise excess profits will continue to go to private hands and a key social provision will continue to be outside public control. If tenants groups and building workers do build up links, reliability and standards are likely to rise also, due to common aims and, to some extent, accountability (to the people who live in the buildings).



# YOU PAY THEY PROFIT

Council housing is BIG BUSINESS.

Over £2,000 million will be spent on new building and improvement work this year. Money has to be borrowed to pay for land, construction and building materials - 4 ways in which private companies profit from public spending on council housing (profits from council housing represent only part of the total profits of the companies below - they also profit from other public projects and private work)

## FINANCIERS

In the past 5 years the 5 major banking groups alone - Barclays, NatWest, Lloyds, Midland, National & Commercial made **£1,222m** profit after tax. The 11 Discount Houses (which deal in local authority & Govt. money) disclosed profits of **£40m** in the same period and have over **£130m** in their "inner reserves".

## BUILDING MATERIALS FIRMS

7 of the big building materials firms - Portland Cement, Turner & Newall, London Brick, Marley, Redland, Rugby Cement, Thomas Tilling - made **£323m** profit after tax in the last 5 years. There are now 350,000 unemployed in the building and construction industry.

## CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES

5 of the big construction companies - Wimpey (with contracts for 30,000 council houses last year) Laings, Tarmac Costain, Taylor Woodrow - made **£184m** profit after tax in the last 5 years. Despite "dire trading circumstances" many other builders made record profits last year. Tarmac gave the Tories £7,000 last year.

## LANDOWNERS

The Bewbush land deal - 644 acres sold by the owner for £3.25m to a company who resold 310 acres 4 months later to Crawley Council for housing for £7m, a profit of **£3.75m** for less than half the land - hit the headlines but it is typical of the way private landowners make obscene profits out of land needed for council housing.



# A TENANTS CHARTER

A great deal of attention has recently been paid to the question of tenants rights - particularly tenant participation - but the truth is that council tenants have very few rights indeed.

NO - protection against eviction

NO - real control over management or rents

NO - right of appeal to the Environmental Health Officer

NO - freedom from restrictions

## 'Second class citizens'

Many council tenants are only too aware of the true position - the second class nature of council tenancies. Private tenants are in a much stronger position with rights of rent control and protection from eviction - and yet the number of private tenancies is rapidly decreasing. Some council tenants groups have led campaigns for a fairer deal which involved drawing up a Tenants Charter.



These include Liverpool, Newcastle, Warwick Estate (Westminster) and All London. The aim of the Charter is not only to improve the individual tenant's rights against the council but also to give tenants more control in their own affairs and so set down the framework for real participation.

## Rights NOW!

The need for a Charter will be there so long as council housing is seen simply as a social service - and not as a right. This will continue until and unless there are changes in the law to give tenants their due rights and a change in town hall attitudes. The move must be from paternalism to cooperation - with more control moving to the tenants.

## A programme of action

It is impossible to reproduce in detail all of the demands made by the various existing Tenants Charters - but the principle is the same for all - a programme of action for change. These are the main points that should be included in any charter:

**1 PROTECTION** - the Rent Acts must ultimately be amended to give the same protection from eviction to council tenants as applies to private tenants.

This has been official Labour Party policy since 1973. And in any case where a council seeks to evict for rent arrears, notice must be given to the tenant with a right of appeal to a committee on which tenants are represented so that the full facts will be known before the council takes any other steps.

**2 MANAGEMENT** - Again it has been official Labour Party policy from 1973 that council tenants should be more involved in the management of their estates. But encouraging the formation of tenants associations to be occasionally consulted is the normal sham for involvement. If there is to be participation tenants associations must be involved in the decision making processes of the Housing Committee. The right of access to the Committee and the information it receives from officers, etc. has to be a natural consequence of this.



**3 RENTS** - Councils should be made to fix rents according to local needs and based on the continued principle of pooling costs - and tenants must obviously be involved in any policy decisions affecting rents.

**4 REPAIRS** - The Public Health Acts must be altered to give the Environmental Health Officers (at present the employees of the council) the same powers of inspection and prosecution over council housing as they have for private tenancies where essential repairs need doing.

**5 TENANCY AGREEMENT** - This should be a formal contract - but one that not only sets out the tenants obligations but also the tenants rights and the council's obligations.

**DEMAND  
A NEW AGREEMENT!  
FULL RIGHTS FOR  
COUNCIL TENANTS!**



## WHY A NEW TENANCY CONTRACT IS NEEDED.

In C/A no.25 it was shown that to talk of a council tenancy agreement was nonsense. Rarely is there an agreement - just a list of do's and don'ts which the tenant is supposed to observe. It is expected that the government will soon issue new guidance to councils on the form of tenancy agreements. The National Consumer Council (at 18, Queen Annes Gate, London SW1) will publish its report proposing a model TENANCY CONTRACT act at the end of July. This follows a survey of tenancy agreements now in force. If local groups want to organise to demand a tenancy contract for their own area then the time to act is now.

### Pressure

Some Councils have been willing to list their responsibilities - others only after pressure. Tenants groups in Lambeth have been negotiating for a new tenancy contract with their council since October 1972 and have only recently had it accepted - though it won't be ready from the printers until the Autumn!

### Beware

But before making the demand for a new tenancy contract remember:

- \* It is no good negotiating if you don't know what you're asking for. So draw up a model of the kind of contract you want.
- \* The best way of getting a model contract is after a meeting of all tenants representatives - with a small elected working party doing the drafting and reporting back.
- \* Insist on adequate consultation with the council and let them know you are prepared to take action if you don't get it.
- \* Don't give up - it won't happen overnight so push to keep negotiations going.
- \* Don't accept 'no' for an answer when it involves important points.
- \* Be ready to act quickly - special or emergency councils may be called to discuss the contract. Make sure tenants are there at the meeting.

## Report on Housing Finance

Written by Community Development Project workers with help from the Political Economy of Housing Workshop. Every move towards housing workers is dictated by profit. Four sections in the report deal with land owners, builders, moneylenders, and exchange professions.

Further information from CDP Information Unit,  
5 Tavistock Place, London WC1 (01-387-5126)

## MODEL CONTRACT

The model contract will be whatever you decide, but above all it must have:

### Protection

- the agreement should make it clear the tenant won't be penalised or threatened with eviction unless there are serious or persistent breaches of the conditions. It is worth remembering there is no protection in law - so get the council to say on what grounds it will evict. These grounds should be limited. There should in any case be a right of appeal for tenants threatened with eviction so that they can have their case heard before court proceedings are started. Preferably to a committee that includes tenants representatives.

### Duties

- the obligations of both the council and the tenant must be set out fully. Any new contract should also explain what action the tenant can take in the case of the council defaulting in its obligations, eg, on repairs, use of S99 Public Health Act and action under SS 32 and 33 Housing Act 1961(C/A no.2,p.17). It should also say what action the council can take.

### Jargon

- the agreement should be clearly set out in a way that is easy to read and understand. No legalistic jargon.

### Don'ts

- the contract should be free of all the petty restrictions so common now - the council must have credit that the tenant is going to behave reasonably.

### Review

- any changes in tenancy conditions must be done only with the consent of and after consultation with tenants groups and the proposed changes widely publicised for all tenants.



**PULL OUT  
WALL CHART  
- SEE OVER**



# The COMMUNITY ACTION Guide to the

# FANTASY & FACT

## of Council Housing



"Council tenants are heavily subsidised by ratepayers and taxpayers"

"Yes, but so are owner-occupiers. They got an average of £2.50 a week in tax relief and option mortgage subsidy last year. Council tenants got an average of nearly £3.00 per week in subsidies from taxes and the rates - which council tenants also pay. And what about the subsidies and tax relief to private industry - over £3,400m in this year - they rarely get questioned"



"Tenants of new council houses only pay a fraction of the real costs of their homes"

"That's only part of the story. The rest, which you rarely hear about is that tenants of older council houses will have paid for their homes, some many times over. Rents and subsidies are not fixed on the basis of the cost of individual houses. Instead, all the costs of building and maintaining all the council's houses are shared between all the tenants. To do away with the "pooling" of rents and/or to sell off council houses, will mean massive rent increases for most families".



"Many tenants don't deserve council housing because they earn good money and can afford colour televisions and big cars".

"Of course some council tenants are now reasonably well off. They have fought for decent wages - why shouldn't they enjoy a good standard of living? However, for most tenants, renting a council house is still their only chance of a decent home".




"Most council tenants want to become owner-occupiers, and so council houses should be sold off to tenants".



"Selling council house only helps a very few tenants to become owner-occupiers of the most attractive council housing, while fewer good quality houses are available for rehousing from clearance areas and the waiting and transfer lists. It cuts subsidies in the short term, but it reduces councils' ability to pool rents, causing further rent increases, and resulting in even greater subsidies in the long term. Councils should be giving tenants security and control over their own homes, not selling them off".









However, for most tenants, renting a council house is still their only chance of a decent home".





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"The standards of council housing are too high and should be cut to save public money".

"Today's standards, set by the government, are the minimum that they can get away with, and they are being reduced further as part of the housing cuts. The space standards of modern council housing are higher than many private houses, but then, on average, council houses contain 5 people per house, while private houses have less than 3. The standard of council housing needs to be increased, not cut".



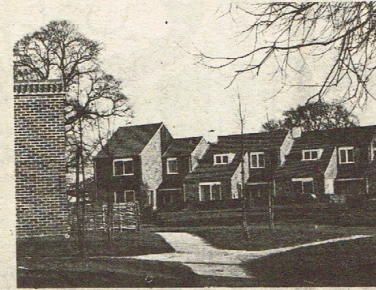
"The rents of council houses must rise sharply to pay for a larger share of the cost of council housing".

"Costs are rising mainly because the government is cutting subsidies and because councils have to pay higher interest payments to the financiers - you already have to pay them 62p of every £1 rent for interest charges - on the money they have to borrow on the money market. Rents don't have to go up. They're being increased so that others may continue to profit at the expense of tenants".





# BUILDING A COUNCIL HOME



Some of the most imaginative and satisfying housing in the country has been built within the council sector. Given a commitment to providing housing that suits people's needs, there is no reason for council housing to be anything but high standard.

Yet the standard of council housing is mixed - from good, well-designed schemes through the satisfactory, tolerable ones to the real failures like the tower blocks, the inner city tenements and the new schemes that rapidly turn into slums. Council housing has its faults - the poor materials, bad design, lack of facilities, cost cutting. These faults are seized upon by its opponents to attack the principle of council housing.

There is great room for improvement in council housing by:

- \* better design
- \* more facilities on estates
- \* better, more convenient and more pleasant locations.

## Winning Improvements

The following sections show how council housing has reached the point it is at today, and what action can be taken to win improvements. We look at:

- \* THE LOCATION OF COUNCIL HOUSING
- \* DESIGN STANDARDS
- \* COST CONTROLS
- \* THE HIGH PRICE OF FAILURE
- \* TENANT ACTION

## LOCATION OF COUNCIL HOUSING

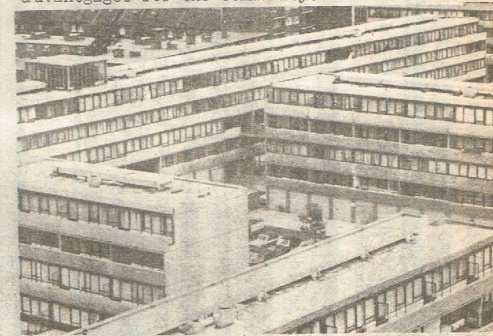
Land costs, not people's needs, nearly always govern the type and location of the development and thus councils prefer to use sites which they already own or can acquire cheaply - land with little value or potential for any other purpose. They prefer cheap land acquired under Part 3 Compulsory Purchase Orders and edge of town sites however unsuitable they might be. Because cost is the priority, the actual location of sites takes secondary importance.

Some council housing is built on expensive sites in central areas. Although councils try to use the cheaper sites, some have little option and are forced to buy costly ones, eg London Borough of Camden. It is generally expensive however because of the high costs which include massive profits for the landowners.

The value of land is determined by its potential use. City centre land which is in high demand for offices and commercial uses is obviously potentially very expensive for housing schemes.

## Private Deals

Local authorities are not generally in a position to buy and develop these sites themselves, and resort to complex 'planning deals' with private developers. The developer makes enormous profits on office and commercial development while the council gains a small amount of housing. In the case of a deal over the Brighton station site in 1973 to enable Brighton Corporation to get some 'planning gain', the developers managed to negotiate themselves more and more commercial gain with less and less advantages for the community.



Southwark: packing them in

## Poor Sites

What is often not taken into account when developing sites for council housing is their convenience for the tenants. Because sites are developed for their economic advantages, many lack good public transport to the centre of town or shops, community facilities, phone boxes, open space, and access to jobs. This is especially true of out of town sites and many large sites which are sometimes virtually small towns in themselves.

Although amenities may be provided over time, the lack of them is often the cause of many of the social problems on new estates, eg vandalism, new estate and New Town 'blues' among tenants, especially those who can't get out!

WITHIN CITIES, many cramped sites on cheap land are developed to high density. See Photo above.



Too many estates are set in a poor environment - lacking open space for kids, landscaping, shops and community facilities.

Because these sites are on cheap land - near a railway for instance - they have to suffer the other users of cheap land, like major roads, industrial plant, haulage depots, refuse tips.

Meanwhile, office developers can leave offices empty. Over 5million square feet of office space is now vacant in the City of London alone. The clear question is: Who should decide the use of Land, and its price to the Community?

## Types of Development

The type of development is generally determined by the location:

\*Improvements and conversions to older properties are generally in sound established residential areas with (although not always) established facilities and amenities.

\*Infill sites are used for single or few dwellings developed on empty sites in existing established areas, eg bomb sites, old prefab sites, allotments.

\*Suburban sites where there are existing low densities, cheaper land and the possibility of green field sites can result in low density developments with even single family housing with gardens (like the huge L.C.C. post 1st world war 'garden city' estates, eg Bellingham, Downham), but with poor transport and facilities.

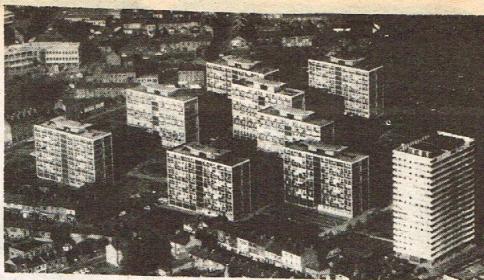
\*'New' and expanded towns present different problems. They are usually 'green field' sites which can mean low densities, single family houses with gardens, and other advantages. However, because of the poor phasing and planning of development in these areas, the people who move there are often without social and essential facilities for a number of years. This often causes disastrous problems such as the high instances of crime, depression and vandalism.

## DESIGN: Fashion and Finance

ARCHITECTURAL FASHION and Government controls have a crucial impact on the standard of council housing. Good design, inside and outside the home, is a major factor for tenants. Even a poor location can be compensated for by successful design.

The main constraints on design are imposed by Government 'loan sanction' on schemes and by the Housing Cost Yardstick. Planners and Architects have the job of ensuring that good designs are produced. But it is up to councils to press the Government for realistic Cost Yardsticks - and more money for new building and maintenance work.

Design is affected by fashion, for example in the 1950s and 1960s government and architects favoured high-rise, high density blocks of flats with vast expanses of useless space, which created countless maintenance problems (see below).



At the moment, low-rise, high density developments are in favour, creating less but potentially more useful open space, even private gardens. This change is largely the responsibility of the anti-high-rise protests, but the architectural profession and government claim also to have seen the light!

## The Design Process

Broadly speaking, the provision of council housing is the responsibility of 3 local authority departments:

i) Housing - responsible for ascertaining the need and deciding what types of homes (ie, size, and number of people) are required.

ii) Planning - responsible for finding a suitable site and deciding where housing should or should not go, and for finally approving the development under the "development control" procedures of the Planning Acts.

iii) Architects - responsible for the design and layout of the scheme. (Some local authority schemes are given to private architects to design as well.)

Housing and Planning Departments theoretically provide a "brief" for the architect stating exactly what is required, but in practice this is rarely very comprehensive and many architects can normally design what they want. There is therefore little or no connection between the architect and his 'client' - the new tenant (although this depends very much on the individual architect or the local authority policy).

TENANTS GROUPS have rarely been involved in the design of new schemes - even when it is known who is going to be rehoused.

In some clearance areas, tenants groups have won important concessions - as we discussed in Community Action No 16, page 5, on 'Community-based Renewal'.







## COST CONTROL: A Short History

"The Rise and Fall of Standards" is covered in Part I of this Action Report (CA 24, p 18/9) so this section gives a brief history of the major changes in design standards.

**1890s** - there were few council developments, but in order to control private development various Public Health Acts were passed which resulted in the terraces of 'byelaw housing' which exist in the older areas of towns today. Prior to this, developers and industrialists were free to jerry-build the slums and back-to-backs which working-class people were forced to live in.

**1920s** - "Homes fit for Heroes" was the slogan which greeted soldiers returning from the First World War, and in 1918 the Tudor Walters Committee (under government orders to find out how to build workers' houses quickly and cheaply) recommended a high standard of cottages at 12 per acre with bathrooms and gardens. Many of these estates are still popular today, although these houses were designed for the more prosperous workers. A lot of cramped poor quality flats were built as well.

**1930s** - standards dropped from 850 square feet 3-bedroomed houses in 1920 to 750 square feet 3-bedroomed houses in the 1930s - to cut costs.

**1940s** - in 1944 the Dudley Committee recommended raising standards to 900 square feet per 3-bedroomed house. After the 2nd World War, Aneurin Bevan's housing drive involved higher standards as well as higher numbers of housing. In the immediate post-war period, New and expanded towns were developed to relieve the pressure on existing towns and, particularly in London to accommodate those made homeless by bombing.

**1950s** - the Tory Government increased subsidies on buildings over 6 storeys and technological innovation accompanied by architectural 'fashion' encouraged the building of tower blocks. In order to accommodate the new building

methods standards of ventilation, fire regulations, and daylighting were relaxed. (Not always successfully - Ronan Point was built around this time!) To cut costs, community facilities were often cut making estates even more oppressive than they were.



**1960s** - in 1961 the Parker Morris Committee recommended reasonable but statutory minimum space standards for private and public housing. These became obligatory in 1969 but clashed with the cost yardstick (councils spending and borrowing limits for housing set down by the government) which Labour introduced two years earlier. High rise developments still prevailed but architectural fashion was gradually being affected by public feeling against high blocks. Mass production of 'industrial' housing did not improve design standards.

**1970s** - space standards are threatened because of increasing costs and by cuts in public expenditure. There is also pressure from the property and building lobby to cut standards. There has been a movement towards improvement and low-rise development but the 1974 Housing Act gave the government a means of controlling and cutting improvement money and it is probable that the Housing Finance Review will suggest lower standards in many cases.

## THE PRICE OF FAILURE

Poor design often results in poor construction which is not only ugly (eg acres of concrete panels and systems-built homes) but also results in high maintenance costs. A survey by "Building Design" this year (a professional journal for architects and builders) showed that some 40 local authorities are spending more than £20 million in keeping modern homes habitable due to design problems. In Andover, £3 million plus has been spent to repair 2,000 homes built by the GLC because of leaks, crumbling brickwork and roof problems.

\*The London Borough of Newham have spent more than £1,135,000 on fractured brick panels



\*In Birkenhead, the demolition of a block of unlettable flats built in 1957 will cost £750,000. To make the flats habitable would cost £4 million.

\*On an estate in Brighton tenants have been warned not to stand underneath the blocks in high winds because bricks used to clad the buildings are falling off!! Repairs will cost £½ million.

The builders blame the architects, the architects blame the tight cost yardstick which means cutting corners, but it is obvious that bad design and poor construction are seriously at fault.

It is easy for those who attack council housing to put the blame for damage caused by bad design on the tenants, eg by vandalism, poor upkeep, etc - but it is ironic that the lobby that attacks council housing includes representatives from the building and design industry! Bad design and cheap corner-cutting construction cannot be the responsibility of the tenants.

The Building Research Station annual report reckoned that materials worth £300 million, enough to build 10% more homes per annum, are scrapped every year on building sites in Britain, so now who's responsible for rising costs? It is the lack of money that is always blamed when facilities or amenities on an estate are not completed.



Birmingham - the good, the bad and the ugly

## TENANTS ACTION

### Insist on being involved

\*Tenants and residents in redevelopment areas should campaign for 'Community based renewal' (see C/A no.16,p5-6) and a clear commitment from the council to rehouse tenants where they want to live.

\*Insist on being involved in the design process and to help write detailed briefs.

\*Follow through designs to make sure corners are not being cut.

\*Enlist professional advice on design and construction if necessary, to make sure you are not being conned.

\*Insist on houses being allocated well in advance of completion so that tenants can be involved in deciding on internal materials, finishes, decorations, etc.

### Getting facilities

\*Campaign for facilities such as meeting rooms, open space, good play areas, good landscaping, etc, to be provided. (See CA 24, p24 for information on what facilities councils should provide.)

\*Press for improved public transport, shops and other facilities to be provided where necessary and make sure these are phased in properly with the rest of the development.

\*Follow the construction as closely as possible and get advice if necessary to make sure quality is maintained.

\*Once your estate is built make sure that the council completes its obligations, especially on such details as landscaping which makes estates bearable to live in.



\*THAT'S THE FILING CABINET! THE NEW MODEL IS OVER HERE!



# TENANTS ACTION



The next few years will be critical for tenants associations and federations. Council housing is under attack and that attack must be fought. To do so tenants will have to build and maintain strong organisations on estates and at a wider level through federations (see C/A No.20 p29-33) and to grasp new opportunities to take joint action with workers (see C/A No.22 p18-22).

Failure to respond to this attack and the cuts in public spending will mean that tenants groups in years ahead will be campaigning and fighting to get facilities, repairs, standards and the amount of council housing back to where it is now.

In this section we want to look briefly at some of the major issues with which tenants will be concerned and to indicate some of the kinds of action and organisation which will be needed.

## FIGHTING RENT INCREASES

Unless tenants organise and fight back there are going to be massive rent increases in the next two years. The Government has already decided to increase rents by an average of £2.50 at current prices between April this year and April 1978 (see C/A No.25 p21). More increases are likely in the same period because more cuts in public expenditure are on the way. The Housing Finance Review and subsequent legislation is expected to demand that tenants pay a larger share of the costs of council housing.

### Different tactics

Unlike the situation under the Tory Housing Finance Act(HFA)in 1971-2, rents will be raised by different amounts by different local authorities. But as under the HFA, local authorities will be forced to increase rents by the Government - this time Labour.

The Labour Government will be forcing both Labour and Tory Councils to increase rents in

contrast to 1971/72 when the Tories were faced with mainly Labour-controlled councils. Consequently the basis of much action against the HFA of attacking the Tories and pushing to get the Labour Party in power to repeal the Act clearly isn't relevant. But the tactic of attempting to absorb the tenant leadership into the Labour Party will no doubt be tried again - based this time on the mistaken idea that the Labour leadership can be persuaded to change its policies.

The mistake of relying on the Labour Party must not be made again. During the HFA struggle tenants organisation and action was very weak in most of the towns and cities which had Labour councils actively opposing the Act. When these Councils inevitably gave up the fight this lack of organisation was exposed. Some of these same councils are now controlled by the Tories who will be very keen to implement the Labour Government's rent increases. Tenants associations and federations in these areas must not allow action to focus simply around attacking the Tories.

### Need for united action

The HFA struggle has also shown the need for and effectiveness of federations, coalitions or action committees on a city-wide basis and for these organisations to coordinate action at a regional and national level. Individual tenants groups can easily be isolated.

Rent strikes - withholding all the rent or only the increases - are the ultimate economic sanction that tenants have. Very strong organisation is needed, and a lot of hard work. Tenants associations should be very sure of the militancy and unity of tenants before undertaking a rent strike. Fear of victimisation and lack of information about what is happening on estates causes strikes to disintegrate.

Rent strikes don't just happen. Other kinds of action - demonstrations at council meetings and rent offices, leafleting and producing regular



bulletins, organising creches - must be used to build up the campaign. They can be used to develop the commitment for a rent strike and used to help sustain it once started. It is also vital to get the close involvement of workers and to keep extending contacts and pushing information at local factories and offices. And make sure that representatives of organisations who promise action in support of rent strikes are actually in a position to do so.

The real reasons for rent increases and the fact that nearly all the money is going straight to the financiers needs to be continually exposed by tenants in newsletters and community newspapers etc. While not letting the council off the hook, it will be important also to take action against the Government and the financial institutions. Its about time demonstrations and pickets were aimed directly at national and local headquarters of banks and other financial institutions.

## ACTION ON REPAIRS & IMPROVEMENT

More rent will be demanded but the number and standard of repairs and maintenance are going down. The effects of recent cutbacks in money for repairs will really start to bite next winter - some estates had a massive backlog of repairs even before the cutbacks. At the same time many Direct Works Departments are under attack by the Tories and private builders (see p 16) which if successful can only worsen the situation for tenants.

Money for the modernisation of older estates has been slashed and it is unlikely to increase significantly in the next five years. These estates are hit in two ways - blighted by postponed plans for improvement, and running repairs are also being cut.

## Coordinate campaigns

Tenants associations on these estates should actively support local cuts campaigns e.g. North Tyneside (see C/A No.23 p20) because it is only by taking action to demand more money and avoiding competition between groups for existing resources that housing conditions will be improved.



This should go hand in hand with organising repairs campaigns, exposing the scale of the backlog of repairs and conditions on estates (see Port Talbot campaign C/A No.19 p3), organising support on estates, coordinating campaigns on different estates and developing links with workers in the Direct Works Department.

New tactics will also have to be developed - e.g. tenants paying for repairs directly out of the rent money with work possibly being done by setting up building coops manned by previously unemployed building workers. Taking legal action on repairs can be a long drawn out affair and the court is not a neutral ground. Winning individual cases is good but these victories are virtually meaningless unless they are used to actually improve conditions generally by changing policies and making more money available. So legal action can only be part of a campaign.



## STOPPING COUNCIL HOUSE SALES

The sale of council houses and equity sharing schemes (see C/A No. 25 p25) are a major threat to the very concept of council housing. Not all areas will be affected, mainly those with Tory or right wing Labour councils, because the Government has said that selling off should depend on "local circumstances". Sales have already started in Birmingham, Nottingham, Rochdale, etc.

The sale of council houses is being pushed by the Tories and the property and building lobby (see p 14). Much misleading and factually incorrect propaganda has been pushed out by these organisations. This has got to be fought by tenants and the real consequences of these schemes exposed. Tenants associations and federations should get bulk copies of the forthcoming pamphlet on the sale of council houses (see ad p 5) for distribution on estates, they should also raise the issue at their committee and public meetings and seek the support of UCATT/NALGO/NUPE and the Trades Council. (see also report on equity sharing p.39)

These schemes can be fought locally by -

- ★ building support to try to force the council to stop selling off and/or implementing equity sharing schemes.
- ★ organise campaigns to ensure that if the council can't be stopped from implementing these



schemes then there is a very low take up by tenants.

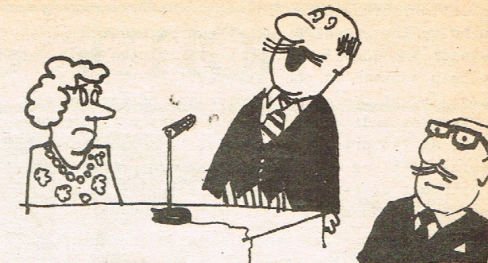
★ campaign to get a clear commitment from councils who haven't already decided on these policies, that they will not implement them.

Pushing out information about the real facts about selling off and equity sharing should be a vital part of any campaign. Short conferences for tenants, trade unionists, activists and labour councillors can play a key role in building support locally and in the longer term getting the Government to ban all sales and scrap equity sharing.

## CAMPAIGNING FOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Over the next few years there will be no increase in the money available for community centres, play facilities, nursery and day centres etc. (see C/A No.24 p24-28). In fact these facilities are usually seen as being 'non essential' and are likely to be cut back even further. So support for cuts campaigns will be important not just to fight for facilities but to get those which have been built open and functioning properly with adequate staff.

Tenants associations shouldn't waste their time



"We Conservatives have always believed in home-ownership - I personally own over a hundred and fifty."

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

and energy competing amongst themselves for the money allocated to them but should examine where all the money in the leisure and recreation budgets is spent and make sure that it is spent in working class areas on facilities needed in those areas and not on prestige projects for the well off.

At the same time groups, and in particular federations should be ensuring that adequate facilities are provided as an integral part of all new housing schemes. This will mean keeping a close watch on new housing plans and taking action whenever the council doesn't meet the standards set by the tenants.

## WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

There are several sources in which you can find information about council housing and housing generally in your area :-

RATE ESTIMATES These are produced each year by the council and are very useful for up-to-date information showing expenditure on all the items in the Housing Revenue Account (see C/A 25, p 24). Obtainable from Finance Department or reference library.

COUNCIL/COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINUTES The Housing Committee will often receive reports on the overall housing situation, state of the slum clearance programme, etc, as well as details of all the individual council housing schemes. The reports are usually very useful and available to the public, but never publicised. The only way to get hold of them is to be present at housing committee meetings or through councillors. The same applies to information about Direct Works Departments - usually controlled by a Building Management Committee. Council and committee minutes - available in reference libraries - spell out the decisions reached.

NEWSPAPERS Local papers report on Housing Committee and other council meetings and while they often sensationalise trivial issues and miss the main points, it is worth keeping a close watch. Keep a file of cuttings - it's worth it in the long run.

G.L.C. ANNUAL ABSTRACT Applies to London only. Always a year or two out of date, but very useful, and enables comparisons with other London boroughs.

HOUSING STATISTICS : HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS (England and Wales) If you want to compare how much your council spends on repairs, interest charges, etc, and receives in rents, subsidies, etc, with other councils, either overall or per house, this is what you need. Published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, 1 Buckingham Place, London SW1, price £1.50 (ask for booklist as they publish information on all aspects of local government).

HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION STATISTICS Published every 3 months by the Department of the Environment; useful for national and regional information. Get a copy from the local reference library, or from HMSO, PO Box 569, London SE1 (01-928 6977).

COUNCILLORS AND COUNCIL EMPLOYEES If you want to find out what's going on and pick up inside information, there's no substitute for getting to know councillors or officers working for the council.

C/A INVESTIGATORS HANDBOOK Check through this (see p 38) on how to find out about councils, councillors, and housing associations.



## HEATING CAMPAIGNS

With more gas and electricity increases on the way coupled with continued wage restraint and high unemployment the heating crisis will be even more severe next winter. The Government and the Boards have so far not made any real changes in policy so many of the 'soft' tactics tried over the past few months will have to be discarded and replaced with more militant ones.

Heating campaigns not only cover the cost and method of paying gas and electricity charges but in many areas are also fighting to get rid of heating and metering systems. (both fully covered in C/A No.23 p24-34). Not only should tenants work with claimants unions (or help to set them up see C/A No.24 p34-36) on the financial issues but also build up support within Trades Councils and the unions so that disconnections can be stopped. Campaigns to get the Boards to change their policies should also expose the basis on which these policies are formed and show how these bodies, although under 'public' control, are in fact run by and operated along capitalist lines.

### National action

The Humber Road T.A. (see p 4 ) have shown that it is possible to get heating systems replaced and Clorius Meters scrapped. A national campaign against Clorius is currently being organised in an attempt to pool experience and coordinate action. It is important that action isn't simply directed against councils - remember that heating and metering systems are produced by private firms who find council contracts quite profitable. Efficient and cheap to run heating systems are a vital part of any house so tenants will have to fight the threatened cuts in the standard of council houses.

Tenants have a powerful economic sanction which is likely to be increasingly used i.e. to withhold heating payments. Tenants in Neston near Liverpool and Cardiff are currently doing this.

Heating campaigns should also link up with repairs campaigns particularly over issues such as dampness and draughts.

## DEMANDING MORE & BETTER COUNCIL HOUSES

Reductions in the standards to which council houses are built will affect both new houses and the improvement of older estates. Watch out for package deals with builders and the Housing Committee sending back schemes for further pruning. New building programmes are being cut back and more cuts are on the way. Look out for councils delaying building programmes and passing sites over to housing

associations or private developers.

This requires keeping close track of council reports, minutes and the newspapers. This work and the tactics and support needed to attack such proposals can best be undertaken by federations or coalitions of tenants groups. If the attack on council housing is to be fought then tenants groups will have to get more concerned with council housing as a whole in their area and with how many new houses are built, where and for whom. Similarly the way redevelopment is carried out is likely to be an important issue (e.g. Nottingham see C/A No.16 p5). These raise a number of issues e.g. access and cost of travel to jobs, direct works department jobs etc. all of which can be used to get the Trades Council and union's support. Rather than being in a totally defensive position federations should take the initiative and campaign for more council housing.



## TACKLING THE FINANCIERS

Money is at the root of most issues like repairs, facilities, building new council houses etc. but the way in which council housing is financed, where the money comes from and how the moneylenders profit (see C/A No.25 p21-24) is also likely to become an increasingly important issue.

The existing system of housing finance is complex and a difficult subject to deal with but it does raise crucial issues like jobs in the building industry, the cost of housing and the proportion of wages spent on it, the lack of housing while massive sums of public money are frizzled away on defence and useless projects.

These issues can and must be raised. Newham Action Committee recently produced a pamphlet on council



housing finance in Newham (see C/A No.25 p39) of which over 1000 copies were distributed through the Trades Council and the Labour Party. In Harlow a housing working party has been set up by the Council with representatives from the Trades Council, NALGO, NUPE, UCATT and Labour Party which will discuss ways of keeping rents down, relaxing tenancy restrictions, the transfer of new town corporation houses to the council etc. Experience in Newham shows that pamphlets and broadsheets have to be followed up by, eg, attending meetings, organising a conference, and/or linked to other campaigns, for example, on repairs.

## ACTION ON CONTROL & MANAGEMENT

Some tenants associations are concerned with fighting for more control over their houses and greater involvement in general housing policies and management (see C/A No.25 p26-28). Others don't want to get involved in management and are demanding that the council does its job better. Some local authorities like Southwark, Newcastle, Sheffield, are pushing forward tenant management participation schemes. These schemes are a key area where local authorities can directly attempt to divide and rule amongst tenants associations by setting conditions and rules which exclude certain groups; to set up their own tenants groups or at least ensure that the tenants leadership is sympathetic to the council; to make the management committee hierarchy as bureaucratic as possible using 'democracy' as the excuse. All this is done without giving any more individual control to tenants over their houses and conveniently

excluding any possibility of involvement in rents, allocation, and new building policies. This isn't fiction - it's happening in many areas.

\* make sure that all proposals on control and management are based on what tenants want and that they understand the implications e.g. responsibilities, time commitment, costs of implementing them.

\* if the council puts forward a scheme, examine it very carefully, don't get rushed by the council, identify the issues it doesn't cover, and make sure that all the issues are raised in tenants association committees and public meetings.

\* remember that changing the key housing policies will have to be done by organising and taking action independently of any district or local management committee.

## FIGHT THE CUTS

More massive cuts in public spending are on the way (see p31) which will affect all the issues discussed above. It is therefore vital that tenants associations and federations organise and get involved in existing campaigns against the cuts and unemployment in their areas. (see Nos. 21,22,23 and p31 of this issue)

The campaign against the cuts must unite the various groups being attacked - you can't just fight for more money for council housing without linking in with the campaigns for stopping the cuts in schools, hospitals, nurseries and so on. Many workers are already fighting the cuts and unemployment. Taking joint action now and finding ways of establishing strong links with trade union organisations should provide the basis for further joint action on rent strikes, factory closures etc.

# THE STRUGGLE AHEAD

What we have tried to show in all three parts of the Action Report is that there is not just one particular issue which affects council tenants e.g. like rents under the Housing Finance Act. There are many and they threaten the basic principles of council housing.

Soaring rents and heating charges, lack of repairs, and declining maintenance, improvements delayed indefinitely, new building cut back, fewer community centres and nurseries, cuts in standards - all these are happening now and will continue for at least the next three years or even longer. It is no use hoping that we are exaggerating the situation - we are not.

## Strength and unity

This means that tenants associations and federations have got a long hard struggle ahead, not only to get a better deal but to defend what they already have. The consequences of not defending it don't bear thinking about. This is not to say that tenants associations have got to

be totally on the defensive. Opportunities and situations will arise when they must take the offensive. And out of organising and taking action to defend council housing should come the strength and unity to fight to improve and expand it so that it meets the needs of tenants and not those of the bureaucrats and the private interests which profit from it. However we should be under no illusions that council housing can be radically changed without getting effective public control of the banks and financial institutions and the construction and building industry. But this cannot be done in isolation in a capitalist system. This whole system of private exploitation of public needs has to be changed.

This cannot be achieved by tenants taking action simply on what they perceive as tenants issues, or by workers taking action only on what they have traditionally seen as workers issues. Only by taking joint action and building strong effective organisations will any substantial gains be achieved.

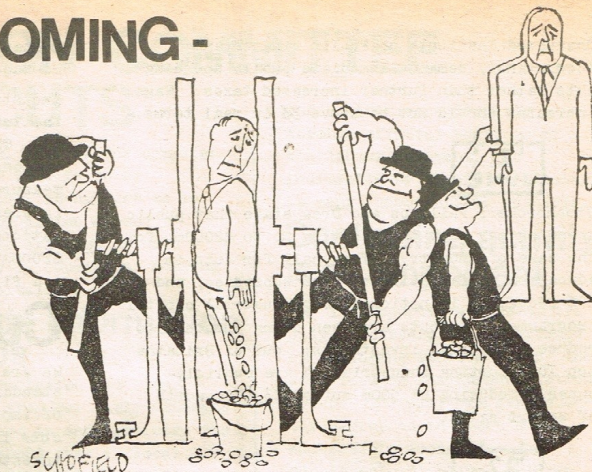
End of Action Report: but more about tenants struggles in future issues



# MORE CUTS COMING -



## THE GNOMES AT WORK



The call for more public spending cuts has risen to a crescendo over the last few weeks. MPs, bankers, brokers, the EEC, the US Treasury and the press are demanding more cuts. In addition, the government is pressing local authorities to limit or, if necessary, to cut their expenditure. All these proposed cuts are IN ADDITION to those proposed up to 1978/79 in the government's 1976 Expenditure White Paper (for details see CA24, p 11).

## Cuts Calendar

This latest cuts 'mania' has developed out of the 'crisis' over the falling pound, and the need to seek support on the international money market. The howls of international financiers are echoed in the Stock Exchange and fuelled by the press who give confusing reports of just how much councils are overspending. Some of this confusion is perhaps understandable, as the government itself is unclear as to the facts.

27  
MAY

DoE Circular 45/76 issued, indicating that expenditure levels decided on in November 1976 are being exceeded, according to estimates being returned by councils. (However, the Circular recognises that the figures may not reflect latest intentions and may include extra provision against inflation.) It expects that some councils will offset costs by rent increases.

The forecast that up to £450m is to be overspent in 1976/77 is based largely on unsubstantiated and unaudited figures (about 30% of the large authorities have not even completed their 1974/5 accounts). The Circular calls for revised estimates to be submitted by July 16th.

Chancellor Healey and Treasury Chief Sir Douglass Wass meet, and draw up a scheme for alternative emergency cuts. At the same time, Healey and Callaghan maintain publicly that emergency cuts will not be necessary, because the pound is undervalued and will recover.

17  
JUNE

£3000m standby credit arranged through international banks. Callaghan again states that immediate cuts will not be made, but both he and Healey stress the need to restrict public expenditure in order to ensure enough money for investment in industry.

19  
JUNE

Opposition censure motion defeated in the Commons. Callaghan reiterates that public expenditure will have to be balanced against the needs of industry. Sir Geoffrey Howe of the Opposition, in a lucid moment, states: "Let's not deceive ourselves as to why the (£3000m loan) was arranged. Those people outside this country were doing it for their own interests as much as ours."

10  
JUNE

Report by group of EEC economists calls for reductions in British public spending over the next financial year, to finance industry.

13  
JUNE

Environment Secretary Shore meets representatives of Labour-controlled councils to say that more cuts must be made. He is unable to say what the reasons for the budgetted overspending are, but threatens sanctions against councils by deductions from the government grant to councils next year. The 'threat to local democracy' that this implies (ie, greater central control over council spending) is emphasised.

19  
JUNE

The Governor of the Bank of England, Gordon Richardson, at the annual conference of the



Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, demands immediate public spending cuts rather than further increased taxes. Wage increases should not be above 3% in real terms.

21  
JUNE

Stockbrokers Phillips and Drew state that public spending may need to be cut by up to £2000m, for the sake of industry. They call for cuts in education, elimination of food subsidies, and a 10% reduction in nationalised industrial capital programmes. So cuts are even being proposed to reduce industrial investments; out of Britain's top 10 exporting industries, 4 are publicly-owned, producing £1,500m out of £3,600m worth of export sales.

22  
JUNE

The Greater London Council bows to government demands and announces £19m worth of cuts. 300 more jobs will not be replaced on top of 'wastage' of 1,200 to 1,500 already proposed. £4m will be cut on transport; £2m will be cut from "goods and services" and increasing charges.

23  
JUNE

US Assistant Treasury Secretary Parsky calls for cuts, to ensure the £3000m loan can be repaid. (However, none of it has even been touched yet.)

29  
JUNE

Chancellor Healey tells the economic summit in Puerto Rico that no decisions on cuts have yet been made. These are expected to be announced later in July. However, unannounced cuts are already taking place, as the government strictly implements its new cash limits on spending. Costs of difference departments, rather than quantities of goods they use, are monitored, and control over expenditure can thereby be more readily imposed.

## Support for industry

So, step by step public opinion is being softened up for the time when more cuts will be announced. Assertions of council "overspending" have taken root and the cuts mentality lives again.

Healey and Callaghan like to relate the need for further cuts to the needs of industry for investment. As Healey said in March 1976, "Although I have cut expenditure in many social fields, I have been increasing expenditure in the business field... And very few manufacturing

companies will be paying any tax at all in consequence this year."

Industry may need this money, but not with the total lack of public control that goes with it. There is absolutely no guarantee that tax concessions will be invested in new plant, safety measures, etc. (Never in the past have capitalist interests allowed this to happen, for social or national benefit. And the government has lost £2000m - £2500m of income through these concessions - a figure that seems familiar!)

## Cuts will increase

We are told that we must suffer now for a better standard of living later. In fact the first result of improved industrial production will be further cuts in public spending, to allow for further investment. The cuts proposed for 1977/8 are far greater than anything we've seen so far.

And once the idea of public spending as "unproductive" has taken root, the chances of recovering to former standards of services will be remote.

Up till now, the government has done all it can to promote the impression that unemployment will fall. Latest figures show that this is not happening. With £400m of the government's £800m contingency reserve "overspent" largely on job creation and retraining schemes, jobs too will soon be axed.





# TYNESIDE ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST THE CUTS

It's 9 months since the idea for a Cuts Committee on Tyneside was first thrown around. A Trades Council Conference on Unemployment and The Cuts, with speakers Mick McGahey and Dave Skinner, focussed the discussion and mobilised the original support.

Throughout its brief history T.A.C.A.C. has worked under the auspices of Newcastle Trades Council and has attempted to develop positive links with the official Trade Union movement. At the same time it stressed the need for rank and file activity and the involvement of ordinary working people. On occasions these objectives can pull a new organisation in varying directions.

## Organising around a specific programme

An early decision was taken to produce a "Programme of Demands" for T.A.C.A.C. This was named 'The Constructive Alternatives' and tried to cover the major issues which the four T.A.C.A.C. working parties - in Education, Transport, Housing, and Health and Social Services - would campaign around.

Though this document received useful initial publicity - through a press conference and follow-up interviews - it also caused a certain amount of confusion. It was a helpful way of making approaches to trades unions and other organisations which, to a certain extent, were already aware of the Cuts debate. But for some audiences its immediate impact was too 'political' and 'utopian' - this particularly applied to tenants and residents groups.

One of the dearest lessons from T.A.C.A.C.'s first few months experience arises from our launching of 'The Constructive Alternatives'

That is, that if the campaign against Cuts is to be effective, it has got to be based on action around specific examples of cuts - be they in education, housing or hospitals.

## Inside information helps

The same lesson has been learnt from our early attempts to gather in and publicise the facts about cuts in local authorities and the public services on Tyneside.



T.A.C.A.C. has a considerable number of workers on the 'inside' of local government and the health services and transport. It is possible to piece together a general picture of where cuts are taking place and what jobs and services will be affected.

Special issues of the "Fighting Cuts", T.A.C.A.C.'s bulletin, have been devoted to nurseries, higher and further education, and to hospitals. Again, this kind of 'service' proves helpful in building links with the organised movement - but specific and less traditional approaches are needed if larger numbers of working people are to be involved in the Cuts Campaign.

T.A.C.A.C. has played a leading part in a variety of events

and activities - directly through official meetings of the labour movement, and indirectly by simply mobilising as many supporters as possible.

## Continuing activity is all important

★ It supported a town-centre play on nursery cuts performed by "Roadgang Theatre Group" and organised by the Nursery Action Group. The play was subsequently performed in front of Newcastle's Social Services Committee! It played a large part in Newcastle's massive May Day demonstration against Unemployment and Cuts - and the links made there with N.U.P.E. (who brought coach-loads of nurses and hospital workers) were developed on May 26th (the national Day of Action) with a picket and packed meeting at the Fleming Memorial Hospital which is threatened with closure.

★ T.A.C.A.C. is also using the film "Fighting the Cuts" widely as a basis for starting discussion and developing an understanding of the links between cuts in each part of the public services.

★ T.A.C.A.C. speakers were invited to several local colleges of education during the recent occupations - and the number of speaking engagements is increasing rapidly as other groups and areas build up Cuts Campaigns.

Finally, T.A.C.A.C. is looking at ways in which the plays, demonstrations, pickets and rallies can be video-filmed and used as a local equivalent of 'Fighting the Cuts'. It is vital to stress the local implications of disastrous national policies wherever possible.

Further information and background documents from The Convenors, T.A.C.A.C., 85 Adelaide Tce, Benwell, Newcastle-on-Tyne 4.  
Tel: 0632-31210





## Image building

Some of the loudest voices to be heard in the latest propaganda war against council housing come from the ranks of the Building Societies, who have for years been nurtured by successive governments concerned to achieve the order and stability of a "property-owning democracy".

They maintain a strong ideological commitment to owner-occupation. To quote a recent speech by an official of the Building Societies Association: "The point where more than half the houses in the country have become owner-occupied is a significant milestone, because even a small stake in the country does affect political attitudes."

The BSA's public relations people work hard - and, to judge by press coverage, successfully - to convey an image of the societies as non-profit-making, benevolent and above all respectable institutions. They take care of the small savings of the 'man in the street' and enable more and more people to own their own homes. So pervasive are these myths that until quite recently the societies seemed above criticism, almost the sacred cows of the property world, especially in contrast to the "disreputable" speculators and fringe banks born of the property boom.

## Hot money

But in 1973 the societies began to suffer from a drastic outflow of funds, leading in 1974 to the disastrous mortgage famine. This brought their financial stability into serious doubt and the Government had to step in with an enormous loan. Today, they are again enjoying a boom in deposits, but they cautiously maintain their liquidity at over 20% (the legal minimum is 12½%). This is partly to stop another house price boom being caused by the release of vast amounts of mortgage money. But the main reason is the need to guard against the effects of another sudden spate of withdrawals.

Why these wild fluctuations in recent years? Because a substantial and increasing proportion

of building society funds are coming from large investors, lured away from the capital market by the tax advantages that the societies can offer, made possible by what is effectively a Government subsidy to wealthy investors (at the expense of the small savers who cannot reclaim tax paid on their interest). This money is invested either through individual holdings up to the £10,000 maximum, spread over a number of societies, or indirectly via insurance companies - in which case they can invest as much as they choose to. It is known as "hot money" because it gets shifted around at short notice, always seeking the most attractive yields. In 1973/4 it went into the banks because their interest rates were higher; more recently the societies have been favoured with hot money.

### WHO INVESTS

- 13.1% by value of individuals' building society deposits are held by those whose total wealth is over £50,000
- 57.1% are held by those worth £10,000 - £50,000
- 16.1% are held by those worth £5,000 - £10,000
- 13.7% only are held by those worth less than £5,000 - the "small savers"

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth 1975.

## Lending to property companies

So when building societies justify their "cautious" lending policies on the grounds of protecting their investors' money, it's not just the man in the street they're talking about. The arrangements for financing house purchase, like those for council house building, are tailored to the requirements of high finance. That's why the societies tend only to lend to professional people and why they "red-line" neighbourhoods of



# ABOUT BUILDING SOCIETIES

older housing in inner cities, with the result that houses stand empty while waiting lists lengthen.

Another widely-held myth is that societies only lend money to owner-occupiers. But up to 10% of their lending is often to "corporate borrowers" - usually property companies whose activities can be very significant in some areas. The Community Development Project teams in Birmingham and the North-East have found that local building societies have been granting mortgages to small property companies engaged in private renting - yet an individual purchaser would have been turned down on such properties.

## Empire building

Why so? You guessed it - there are often intricate connections between building society directors and estate agents who handle the properties. And it doesn't only happen in working-class areas:

The Chairman of the Alliance Building Society (Britain's 6th largest, with headquarters in Hove) said recently; "the Society's continuing concern to provide all possible help to first-time buyers will be an important and essential part of our effort to contribute as fully as we can to home ownership"

## Web of connections

Yet members of the Coleman-Cohen family, related to the late Lord Lewis Cohen of Brighton, a local worthy and founder/managing director of Alliance, are closely involved with property dealings in Brighton. Alliance lent over £2m at the height of the property boom for a couple of luxury flat developments in the town. This hardly inspires faith in the society's pledge to assist first-time buyers in a town with a serious housing shortage and already geared toward the top of the property market.

The skilfully woven web of connections between developers, professionals and financiers in Brighton includes other building societies, too. The Sussex Mutual lent £165,000 to a local speculator to build luxury flats near Brighton Marina. As this company's profits amounted to only £1,000 in the previous year it surely wasn't a safe bet for a building society loan. But it just so happened that its director was a business associate of one of the directors of Alliance ... The flats were built, and the company's profits jumped to £61,000 when they were sold!

Further, the President of the Sussex Mutual is an estate agent in partnership with a director of the Brighton-based Citizens' Regency Building Society. This firm handled the sales of the luxury flats built by the Cohen family group of companies! And the "empire" has lately been extended by the appointment of a director of Brighton's largest building firm (Braybon) to the board of the Alliance.

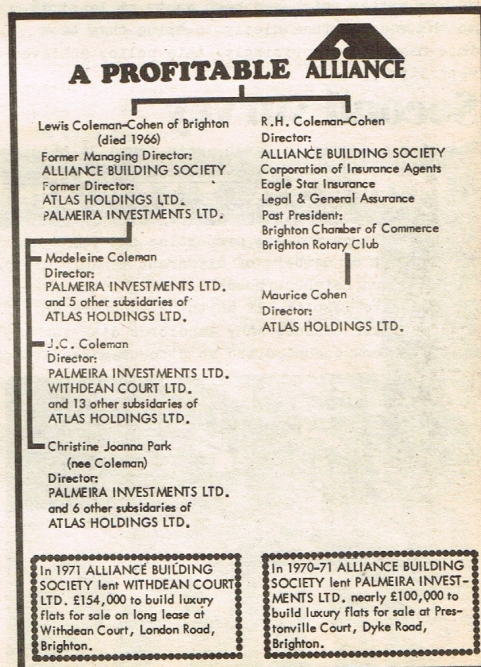
The Brighton-based building societies have also granted mortgages for luxury housing estates in Scotland, and for redevelopment schemes in Surrey and North London involving demolition of houses and construction of office blocks. At least one of the London schemes is not unconnected with the notorious Freshwater group. And these investigations are just scratchings at the surface ....

## Don't be conned

90% of building society mortgages may still go to owner-occupiers, but on the evidence of how they are lending the other 10%, no-one should continue to be conned by the benign and apparently altruistic concern about "housing for people" beamed out by their advertising agencies. Their ideological interests in home ownership are no doubt reinforced by the hidden profits they can make out of it.

But the vested interests of individuals in the building society movement are not important in themselves. They are important because they exemplify the "logic" behind our contorted housing finance system, which dictates that housing is first and foremost a commodity to be invested in and traded in when and where profitable, rather than a crucial human need. In this system the building society movement is parasitic rather than benevolent.

Damaris Rose.





# PADDINGTON EMPTY PROPERTY CAMPAIGN

Leaving homes empty during the present housing shortage is a scandal. All community groups fighting for housing as a right should be attacking the system that causes homes to be wasted. Also they should be acting to get empty properties lived in and encourage occupation by squatting.

## 2,500 empty units

When the Paddington Federation of Tenants and Residents Association carried out its first survey of private property in September 1974, we found 2½ thousand empty units of accommodation in Paddington alone. Westminster City Council virtually ignored this and instead of following our recommendations for action, continued to approach owners of properties which had been empty at least 18 months and ask them nicely to bring them back into use. Not surprisingly, this policy achieved very little.

## Second survey

The second survey in March again found 2½ thousand empty units. 953 of these had been empty at least since the first survey, 18 months earlier. Our second survey covered the same area. It concentrated mainly on private properties and was again carried out by members of different tenants groups in their own neighbourhoods. Although this makes for accurate results, if anything they are an underestimate because many landlords disguise empty flats to look occupied and so discourage squatters.



## Why empty?

Some reasons are: (1) Speculation - private owners both large and small are hoarding property as an asset to be disposed of when the price goes up again. (2) Ignorance or fear of Rent Acts - Private Owners are afraid to let (especially for short terms prior to rehabilitation) because they think they will not be able to remove tenants. (3) Bureaucratic Red Tape - Improvement grant applications often take a year for confirmation. Meanwhile the home remains empty. (4) Inefficient Administration or Flaming Blight - Many privately owned homes are empty because of bad housing management.

## Westminster Council should act

Our report said the council should:

- Stop mollycoddling speculators and use CPOs where owners show no intention of putting properties to use. Westminster's voluntary acquisition programme is now zero and they have so far CPO'd only one house which had been empty 13 years - a farcical gesture!
- Get Government money under Circular 33/76 for Municipalisation. Grants cover acquisition and initial works and are not affected by S.105 restrictions.
- Increase their bid under S.105 of the 1974 Housing Act to include a much larger sum for improving acquired empty houses.

## Government action needed

We also recommended changes in Government policy: (1) Introduce penal rating - the rates go up steeply the longer a property is empty. (2) Bring back Requisitioning powers for local authorities to take over and manage properties where owners take no steps to use them. Frank Allaun's



"Requisitioning Bill", although failing to get through its second reading, has now been included in "Labour's Programme 76". This Bill will need widespread grass roots support to become law and then pressure on local councils to use the powers that will be available.

## A National Campaign?

Paddington Federation got some good national and local press coverage for the report. We called a public meeting at which the 'Westminster Empty Property Action Committee' was set up. This committee has produced 'Another Empty Home' poster for all groups to use as part of a London-wide or national campaign. In time we hope the red cross on the poster will become recognised as the mark of the plague of home wasting. Other direct action is planned for Westminster, but what are other groups around the country doing? We feel that the Requisitioning Bill failed because not enough groups actively supported it. WEPAC is prepared to help set up a London-wide or national campaign on empty property. So send information and reports on what action other groups are taking.

### We can provide:

- ☐ posters for groups to fly post empty homes
- ☐ copies of survey form used
- ☐ help on doing surveys.

Surveys of empty houses can involve a hell of a lot of work. So it is best to start with a small bad area first. It is often not easy to establish why property is vacant, or who owns it - though information on specific addresses can be found from neighbours, council planning departments or Companies House files (see C/A Investigators Handbook). Groups may be able to run a very effective propaganda campaign just by concentrating on one or two bad examples or companies.



**WESTMINSTER**  
7000 EMPTY HOMES  
7000 HOMELESS ON WAITING LIST

The bottom part of the Poster will be blank for groups to put on their own local information. Use a red spray can as well as the red cross on the poster.

MAKE A RED CROSS THE SYMBOL OF EMPTY PROPERTY.

POSTER: 10 copies - 50p + 10p postage, 25 copies - £1.25 + 20p postage, 50 copies - £2.50 post free.

For posters and information: Andrew Mason, 510 Centre, 510 Harrow Road, London W9. 01-969-7437. Copies of 'Empty Properties in Paddington' 25p from same address.

## HELP TO SELL 'COMMUNITY ACTION'

We are constantly trying to get the magazine to more tenants and residents associations, community projects, trade unionists and activists.

Could YOU help us by taking extra copies of Community Action to sell direct to tenants groups, friends etc? About 100 people around the country already support Community Action in this way, but we want to at least double this number.

Please fill in the form below. We will send you some C/A posters and information sheets describing C/A aims together with a list of contents of back issues. Each issue of C/A will be sent on a sale or return basis. We must however have payment and unsold copies returned on a regular basis.

### Please send me

- ☐ 6 copies of C/A
- ☐ 9 copies of C/A
- ☐ 12 copies of C/A
- ☐ specify

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Community Action, P.O. Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ



# REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REF

**COMMUNITY ACTION IN KENSAL GREEN** by William Holgate, unpriced from Architectural Association, 34-36 Bedford Square, London W.C.1.

Traces the struggle of the Kensal Green Residents' Association against the redevelopment of 1000 homes. Although the residents won, the author goes on to discuss how even a major success on a local issue left the administrative and decision making structure unaltered. This in turn leads him to an all-too-brief analysis of the political potential of community action.

**HOME INSULATION PROJECT PACK** by Friends of the Earth, Durham, Price £1 + 20p post. from: FoE, Vane Tempest Hall, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 1QG.

An attempt to collect together the experience of a number of groups aiming to provide sufficient information, ideas and contacts to encourage more groups to mount home insulation campaigns through pressure on local councils and/or government or through self-help projects. Includes sections on background information, how to do a survey, estimates of possible savings, materials, grants available and a list of contacts.

**WELFARE RIGHTS - THE NORTH SHIELDS CAMPAIGN** Summer 1975. 30p plus 9p post from N.Tyneside CDP, 4 Northumberland Place, North Shields, NE30 1QP. 08945-82656.

First report of the research project of North Tyneside Community Development Project. The report describes in detail a 2-month intensive campaign of publicity information and counselling on welfare rights in North Shields. Although enquiries about benefits increased dramatically, the effect on take-up among those eligible for benefit was small. The conclusion is that although there is a need for better rights information, low take-up is inevitable with means-tested benefits. Information leaflets used in the campaign are included.

**CRISIS-WOMEN UNDER ATTACK** by C.I.S., from Counter Information Services, 9 Poland St, London W.1. Price 45p + 15p postage.

Examines in detail the effect on women of high unemployment and savage public expenditure cuts. Illustrates the hollowness of the equal pay and sex discrimination reforms and concludes that the joint policies of employers and the government are falling most heavily on women, destroying gains made in past decades, and that they continue to feed off women's vulnerability. Highly Recommended.

**ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TENURE PREFERENCES AND COSTS.** 40p from Southwark CDP, 38 Braganza St, London SE17 01-582 1223, or Joint Docklands Action Group, 58 Watney St, London E1 01-790 8342.

An assessment of equity sharing in legal, financial and social terms, a survey of tenants in Newington, Southwark, to find what they want from their housing, and a clear condemnation of the effect the proposed equity-sharing schemes would have on the Docklands. "It is clear that the adoption of such a scheme would mean complete abandonment by local authorities of the cherished belief that they should house people on the basis of need."

**WHO PLANS BRIGHTON'S HOUSING CRISIS?** by Peter Ambrose. 40p from Shelter, 86 Strand, London WC2

This Shelter Local Report examines the relationship between the local housing crisis and the land use planning system (Structure and Local Development Plans). Shows how far the finance and property system determines development, and land use controls are largely ineffective against these powerful lobbies, especially without the political will locally to make planning work to produce socially useful development. Uses case studies from Brighton.

## USE Community Action - send us YOUR reports

### Public Inquiries Guide

A 40 page booklet containing a great deal of information about public inquiries, how they are run and how action groups can organise a case to present at the inquiry. It describes the different types of inquiry - CPO, planning & roads inquiries, outlines the procedure adopted at each and details the sort of arguments action groups can use. Price: 15p to action groups, 50p to others, from: Shelter Community Action Team, 159 Cleveland St. London W1P 5PG.

### INVESTIGATORS HANDBOOK

A guide for tenants, workers and action groups on how to investigate companies, organisations and individuals. Details hundreds of sources of information and explains where to find it. how to use it. Only 30p (inc post.) from Community Action, P.O.Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ



# Information Exchange

## HEATING DISASTER

A very detailed and hard-hitting report from H.A.G. produced because the Council wouldn't allow them any involvement at all in the Council's own report on the problems of Hunslet Grange Estate. The report is based on months of work by residents, and tells of the appalling state of repair of the flats, dampness, the lousy heating system and the failure of the Council to make any effective improvements. Hunslet Grange:- An experiment and its victims, 35p + 9p post. from Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group, 16 Askern Chase, Leeds 10.

## New papers

### CLYDESIDE ACTION:

First issue of this new regional paper for tenants and trade unionists on Clydeside covers womens rights to council housing, the Clydeside anti-dampness campaign and much more. 15p + 8p postage from Clydeside Action, 53 St Vincent Cres, Glasgow.

### BIRMINGHAM BROADSIDE.

New bi-monthly incorporating Grapevine and West Midlands Grassroots. First two issues have covered the Green Ban campaigns, the local fight back against the cuts, the rise of the National Front in the Midlands and other local news. 15p + 9p postage from Broadside, 173-5 Lozells Road, Lozells, Birmingham B19 1HS

## DOCKLANDS

Joint Docklands Action Group is a federation of action groups in the 5 docklands boroughs of London. It's aim is to ensure that any redevelopment in the Docklands area meets the needs of local people. This paper is a comprehensive look at the proposals of the Docklands Joint Committee and JDAG's reservations and demands. Well produced, lots of cartoons. Docklands: The Fight for a Future, from JDAG, 58 Watney St, London E1 7QD 01-790 8342

## CUTS CAMPAIGN

Leeds Campaign Against the Cuts leaflet describes in detail how and where the cuts are being implemented in Leeds. It also explains why public expenditure is being cut - "to carry the costs of the failure of British industry" - and LCAC's plans for action. Fight The Cuts, 5p from LCAC, 16 Methley Tce, Leeds 7. Tel: 625355.

## Special offer!

Package of all back issues of Community Action Nos. 5,6,9 to 25 for £3.40 - save 61p! From CA... see form on page 40.

# LETTERS

## ZEBRA CROSSINGS

Dear C/A,

I should have written much sooner but prompted by your last article on Zebras I'd like to report similar success using DOE Circular 13/74.

From a child being injured on this section (Albert Royds St.) of the Rochdale ring road in Xmas 74 we worked through:

- ▶ road blocks - Jan., Feb. & April 75
- ▶ petition & marches - June 75
- ▶ traffic census - July 75

The census was done by us using the Circular as a guideline and we ended up (Oct. 75) with a point by point argument based on that circular. After that we very quickly got a crossing approved (in principle) We'd be happy to give advice on this to other groups in this part of the country. Contact via Belfield School, Samson St., Rochdale 341363. Irene Stilles or Ian Joiner.

Send your letters to  
Community Action,  
P.O.Box 665,  
London SW1 X 8DZ





## Community Cafe

CO-OPERATIVE COMMUNITY CAFE needs a full-time worker. Rotten wages, great variety of work. For details write to UHURU, 35 Cowley Road, Oxford.

## Community Artist

TELFORD COMMUNITY ARTS are looking for a COMMUNITY ARTIST to establish a community print shop. Must have experience in community work/action and skills in silk screen, letter press and off-set-litho printing, graphic design and photography. Please write to us at 147 Severn Walk, Sutton Hill, Telford, Salop. as soon as possible.

## Night Shelter Workers

Would you like a year in a scenic part of S. Wales and a challenging and interesting job? We urgently need 4 young people to be resident workers in a night shelter for single homeless men and women. The work is hard but rewarding and the salary is £1000 plus free food and board. Please write giving full details to Gavin Kitching (Secretary) Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless (SASH) 18 Waterloo Place, Brymill, Swansea, or phone 0792 57688 after 6pm.

## LAW CENTRE

needs three workers :

1. A Community Worker with group and social work experience.
2. Two people to work in fields of Housing, Employment and Welfare Law.

All three workers should be able to type.

Apply in writing to Libby Jones, Lambeth Community Law Centre, 506/8 Brixton Road, London SW9.  
Closing date: 6th August.

## EVICCTIONS

Redevelopment Action Petershill and Springburn wants your knowledge and experience of your Local Housing Authority's policies of eviction with particular regard to its use in areas of condemned and redevelopment properties. Your replies please to: J. Baron-Mall, 57 Midton Street, Glasgow G21, quickly. Thank you.

## Worker Wanted

Second worker needed for small housing cooperative. Typing, Roneo, Reception, filing etc. Salary: £2459 per annum. 4 days a week, 10-5. Must be able to start work by end of July. Applications in writing to: Brockley Tenant Cooperative, The Albany, Creek Road, Deptford SE8, or phone 692-8368 and ask for Richard.

## Distribution cooperative

This Autumn a Distribution Cooperative, representing over 50 socialist, feminist and community journals and magazines will be launched. The co-op has been set up after months of research and many meetings. We hope that the co-op will enable the 'alternative' magazines to reach a wider national readership in bookshops, student unions and in other outlets.

The co-op will run a fortnightly van delivery and a parcels service.

Magazine distribution is dominated by the near-monopolies like W.H. Smith and Menzies. Recent increases in postal charges threaten the survival of some small, long established magazines.

Further information from 'Publications Distribution Co-operative', 282 Park Road, London N8.

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\*\*\*\*\*  
INVESTIGATORS HANDBOOK @ 30p each

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Start with issue No. \_\_\_\_\_

BACK ISSUES OF COMMUNITY ACTION issues No. 5, 6, and 9-18 @ 15p each +9p postage for single copy, 5p per copy for more than one back issue. No. 19 onwards 18p each + postage. Package of all back issues costs £3.40.  
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# COMMUNITY ACTION

No.27 Aug/Sept 1976  
18p



# FIGHT PROPAGANDA



# COMMUNITY ACTION

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## Push Out Your OWN Propaganda

We are surrounded by propaganda every day - we read it in the press, listen to it on the radio and on television. Propaganda is pushing out information, news and opinion as you see it and is one means of trying to get others to agree with you.

The government pushes out propaganda every day. So does industry, so does the City, so do the professionals in the Housing Lobby (see p.34). How else could the government slash public spending on housing, education, health and social services - and have 1½ million people unemployed - and get away with it without more opposition?

The 'need' for more money for industry, the 'need' to tighten our belts and make sacrifices have been accepted by many people because there has been a massive campaign by the government (£2½ million on newspaper ads alone) and industry to try to convince us that there is no alternative, and that the working class have got to sacrifice services to help industry. What comes over in the press, radio and TV is the needs of the financiers and employers - dressed up as the National Interest. What chance do working class groups get to put over their needs and demands?

It's vital that tenants and workers counter this barrage of propaganda with their own - with facts, information and news about how the cuts are affecting them, what action can be taken and what the alternatives are.

But as we show in the Action Notes : The Propaganda Battle (p.22), the Cuts campaign is only one issue. Tenants and workers have to push out information and news on all the issues and all the struggles they are involved in - put over their own propaganda. It's not a separate thing that only the 'political' groups do - it's part of nearly every group's activities whether they call it propaganda or not.



# NEWS & VIEWS

## LIVERPOOL TENANTS DEFEAT COUNCIL OVER TENANCY AGREEMENTS

After a legal battle lasting 3 years the House of Lords ruled in March of this year that local authorities had an "implied obligation" to keep the "common parts" (lifts, stairs, rubbish chutes, common lighting, etc) of council dwellings in reasonable repair. The ruling came as a result of the action of a Liverpool tenant in a tower block (Haigh Heights) who took the Corporation to court for its failure to maintain these communal areas.

### Tenants emergency meeting

However, within a few weeks of the court ruling, the City Solicitor put a resolution forward suggesting that tenancy agreements should be changed. In his report to Council, he said that "the existence of this implied covenant, which is applicable to all the Council's multi-storey flats, leaves the Authority open to be pursued through the courts by an aggrieved tenant who alleges the Council is in breach of its repairing obligation". Two committees.

allowed this to go through without a single objection. Only at this stage did tenants begin to realise what was happening. West Everton Community Council (with over 30 multi-storey blocks in its area, including Haigh Heights) called an emergency meeting which was attended by 150 local residents. The tenants' anger was focussed on their councillors who had allowed this resolution to go through. A campaign to lobby councillors, obtain city-wide support, and arrange a march on the full Council meeting in the Town Hall was then mounted. Over 200 people marched and saw the Council take the issue first and unanimously vote out the proposed change.

### Future action

It was perhaps a small victory, but a victory nevertheless, achieved by a united body of tenants. It brought home to many just how few legal rights council tenants have and showed people's fears that, at a time of cuts, maintenance of communal areas will get even worse. Further meetings have been arranged to try and keep the unity achieved on this campaign, and to look at issues such as rent increases, internal repairs, houses for sale, and the need for a tenants' charter.



### STAND UP FOR YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

The City Council is taking away your legal rights to repairs to communal areas

March to the Town Hall on Wednesday 28th July 1976 Starting from Islington Square at 12 o'clock

Two Committees of the Council have just voted that your tenancy agreement be amended so that the Corporation will not be responsible for lifts, stairs, rubbish chutes, passageways, lighting, etc in your block of flats.

Express your disapproval of this resolution by lobbying your Councillors and supporting the march to the Town Hall.

*united we can defeat this resolution*

## CARDIFF HEATING AGREEMENT ?

Meanwhile in Cardiff the heating agreement which the Pentwyn tenants (see C/A No26 p3) are asked to sign contains the following classic clauses-  
a. The supply of heat shall be

given at such times and to such temperatures as the City Council shall from time to time determine and the City Council shall be under no liability whatsoever for failure of such supply from any cause whether or not such cause arises from or is contributed to by the negligence of the City Council their servants or agents..



e. The City Council may without prejudice to any other action they may take withhold the supply of heat at any time and for any reason including the non-payment of the rent of the said premises or of the charges for the supply of heat hereinafter contained.

More on this and the campaign in the next issue of C/A.

## LONDON

### EMPTY HOMES CAMPAIGN SPREADS

In Paddington you can't fail to see the posters marking hundreds of empty homes. In Pimlico the posters with the red crosses are spreading and WEPAC, the Westminster Empty Property Action Committee, has had orders for over 500 posters from groups in Brent, Hammersmith, Camden, Lambeth, Battersea, Kensington, Manchester and Burnley.

Empty homes in a time of housing shortage are a prime example of the system's failure. Different areas will need different solutions - compulsory purchase, squatting, etc. But in each area with empty homes, a campaign is essential.

### Buy & repair

In Westminster, as well as a poster campaign (backed up by red crosses with a spray can), the campaign sent a delegation to the Tory Housing Chairman. One of our main arguments was that the Council should use money under the Department of the Environment Circular 33/76 to buy and repair empty property. This spending has not been specifically cut by the DoE - yet.

The WEPAC report is going to the next Housing Committee - the Chairman has agreed to meet us again after that. Meanwhile we are working on a petition and some direct action ideas.



"Another Empty Home" poster from Andrew Mason, 3 Croxley Road, London W9 3HH.

10 copies for 50p + 10p post.  
25 copies for £1.25 + 25p.  
50 copies for £2.50 post free.

There is a 6" space at the bottom of the poster for your own statement and local information.



## TYNESIDE

### TENANTS INVESTIGATE REDIFFUSION

Tenants on Tyneside have started a major investigation into REDIFFUSION piped TV service.

Our enquiries have exposed so many facets of maladministration, social injustice, erosion of basic freedoms and dangerous practice wherever Rediffusion are involved with local councils as to be too numerous to mention.

The contracts are heavily biased in favour of Rediffusion, leaving them divorced from any financial, administrative or social responsibility. They also escape the ensuing arguments and belligerence of outraged tenants who find themselves captive customers of Rediffusion. They must contribute to an unnecessary 'service' which they neither need nor want but which they must pay for even if they do not use it. Even essential services such as gas, electricity and telephone do not demand this imposition, and failure to pay bills for these services only results in the cutting off of supplies. But not paying the telly bills means being put into rent arrears with the threat of subsequent eviction.

### Community service?

Piped TV is classed as a 'Community Service', but only council tenants are made to pay, although the private dwellings 'enjoy' the same 'privilege' of the service.

Do you have REDIFFUSION in your area or estate? Have you had problems with the 'service'? Do you object to paying for Rediffusion whether you use it or not? Please contact:  
Joe Dudding, Secretary,  
Council Tenants Protection Association, 57 St Peters Rd, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear NE28 7EY.



# LONDON

## TENANTS WIN REPRIEVE FOR GOODGE PLACE

Members of a local tenants' association have at last managed to lift planning blight and the threat of demolition on 8-14 Goodge Place, W1 by convincing Camden Council that rehabilitation is feasible.

The terrace of eighteenth century houses, which are both listed and in a conservation area, were condemned in 1964 when the GLC declared them unfit and the subject of a Clearance Order. Although some of the tenants were rehoused, the GLC never acquired the houses and most were reoccupied. The site has also been under threat

for rehabilitation and both claimed it could not be done 'at reasonable cost'. In desperation, Camden approached local groups saying the GLC were proposing to demolish the terrace and that there was nothing Camden could do unless a good case could be made for retention and improvement.

### Advantages of local scheme

Approaches to local councillors having failed to get the Council to revise its feasibility study, a Working Party was formed by the Tottenham Street Tenants' Association and an amenity society, the Charlotte Street Association. Over several months this produced a conversion scheme for about 50 bed spaces at a cost substantially below Camden's or the GLC's figures and well within the DoE cost guidelines.

scheme are many. Two houses are at present occupied by Bengalis living one family to a room with one wc per house and no bath for which they pay about £10 per week. Other houses are either vacant or squatted by only one or two people. The local scheme allows for all existing residents to be rehoused in the terrace and a phased rehabilitation programme could mean that no decanting is necessary. One house is already managed by the TSTA under license from the Middlesex Hospital and is occupied by six medical students. For this, plumbing, hot water and fire-proofing were fitted for £500 as a result of a loan from the hospital which is paid off over three years from the rent. A visit to this house by councillors just before the Housing Committee meeting may have convinced them that Goodge Place need not be written off.

### Continuing local control

Now that Camden is committed to the acquisition and rehabilitation of Goodge Place, local associations are looking into ways of retaining local control over the way the scheme is implemented and managed in the long term. This could be done by forming a tenant's co-operative to work either directly with the council, to use a housing association as a technical agency or to apply directly to the Housing Corporation for funds. This might then develop into something much larger; to bring a lot of other vacant property in the area into residential use and under local tenant control in order to provide many local residents who work unsocial hours in central London with reasonable living conditions.

\*\*\*

Nick Bailey, Tottenham Street Tenants Association, 1 Tottenham St, London W1.  
(Tel. 01-637 0754)



of redevelopment since the land is zoned for expansion by the Middlesex Hospital, although this has now been vetoed by central government.

### Council seeks residents' help

In April 1975 Camden Council placed a CPO on the terrace but little progress was made because they claimed they could not trace the owners. In the meantime, both GLC and Camden architects did feasibility studies

Whereas the official schemes were for full conversion to self-contained flats, the Working Party argued that the houses were better suited to conversion to maisonettes and bedsitters with full amenities. This proposal was finally accepted by Camden Housing Committee in June 1976, but much depends on whether finance will be forthcoming from the DoE for a non self-contained conversion.

The advantages of the local



# WAKEFIELD BUILDING SOCIETY 'LOSES' £600,000

Following the disclosure of the web of connections between leading figures of the Alliance Building Society and loans to property companies in the last issue of C/A, came the news that the Wakefield Building Society had made "certain losses" now known to be £600,000.

## BSA action

News that one of the oldest building societies in the country was in trouble prompted swift action by the Building Societies Association (BSA). Before the loss was made public the president of the BSA, Raymond Potter, was contacted. Consequently when it was announced that the General Manager of the Wakefield was suspended and that the Fraud Squad were investigating the books it was also announced that the Wakefield was being taken over by the country's biggest building society, the Halifax (President-Raymond Potter). As the Financial Times clearly stated, the rapid action of the BSA "underlined forcefully the deep and longstanding fear which the movement has of anything that threatens to destroy the image of stability and security built up over the last 200 years."

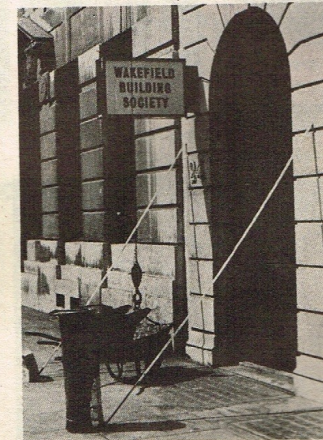
## Poulson link

The General Manager of the Wakefield, William Robinson, is also a Director of the Society. A fellow director in 1970 was John Poulson, the bankrupt architect now serving seven years for corruption. Poulson is in Wakefield jail - only a few hundred yards from the society's head office.

## Many others crashed

It's not the first time that building societies have been in trouble. In the late 1950's the Scottish Amicable and the State Building Societies went bust. The latter fraudulently lent money to companies controlled

by the society's directors which was used to finance speculative property developments which failed. More recently the Bournemouth and Christchurch and the Derbyshire Building Societies experienced financial difficulties - the latter was bailed out by that knight in shining armour, the Halifax. Each year, in fact, the operations of several smaller societies can come in for some critical examination from the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies and as a result may end up combining with a larger society.



## "As safe as houses"

Two days after the announcement of the Wakefield losses several national newspapers carried articles praising the BSA action and reassuring that all was well with the building society movement. This news item was 'dead' after 2 days. There have been no calls for a public inquiry or investigation. Societies are "as safe as houses" claimed the Observer.

# LEEDS STREET COMMITTEES IN CHAPELTOWN

Chapelton is a multi-racial community set in a rundown area of Victorian Leeds. The local authority have drawn up a Chapelton Plan

to provide the framework for the future development of the area. The plan was drawn up in consultation with the Residents' Liaison Committee, set up to represent the residents. But after the hopes raised in the early stages of the plan, residents now feel frustrated and angry. This was predictable. At no stage during the "consultation procedure" did local councillors take part in meeting the residents.

## Improving the area

The Chapelton Community Association aims to involve residents in the attempt to improve conditions in Chapelton. About 2 months ago we adopted an idea which we would like to recommend to other community groups.

One hot sunny weekend we distributed 1500 leaflets to advertise our public meeting. We found that in each street people would gather to talk to us about their ideas for the area. But the meeting was attended by only 30 people. This seemed a poor response to our publicity efforts, particularly after the discussions we had in the streets. So at the meeting someone suggested the idea of street meetings, and we decided to give the idea a try.

## Awareness increasing

Since then we have held five street meetings. We distribute leaflets - which contain a minimum of words, just the key ideas - on Friday and Saturday, down the whole street. In giving them out we aim to tell nearly everybody about the meeting. This produces a much better response than a leaflet through the letterbox. And even if people don't come to the meeting, at least they know something is going on. We hold the meetings on Sundays at 8 pm at a convenient point on the street.

Our first street meeting was



# GLASGOW

## THE ROLLS MUST GO

1100 building workers sacked and modernisation of 940 Glasgow council houses halted- that is the result of the collapse of the building contractors Myles Callaghan Ltd. Another story that the National Housebuilding Federation won't be publicising.

The firm, which had over £7m worth of work with Glasgow Council, has known debts of £2.3m which include £300,000 owed to the Inland Revenue for taxes already deducted from the workers pay packets. The firm went bust when the Royal Bank of Scotland demanded immediate repayment of a £620,000 loan. Several suppliers of materials had previously also demanded payment.

In the last 4 years the firm had completed or renovated 4,000 houses (rented properties) in the west of Scotland. This work was very profitable - at least for the Myles Callaghan family - they live in a £100,000 house and his father, who started the firm, lives in one worth £80,000. The two families ran around in 6 company cars including a £34,000 Rolls Royce Camargue and 2 Jaguars - that is until they were repossessed by the Receiver! Another example of builders living off the backs of tenants.

Glasgow Council direct works department is having to finish work on about 70 houses nearing completion on the Barrowfield, Old Swan and Oatfields modernisation schemes. Other private contractors are to be asked to undertake the remaining work.

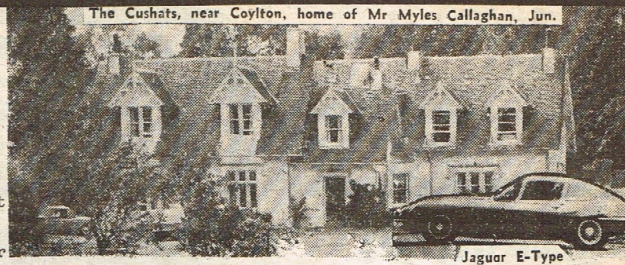
Myles Callaghan stated that:

"We have all worked hard to save this firm - it is 19 years of my life - and we are all making sacrifices. My Rolls Royce will have to go."

Two weeks later he claimed he had been offered £1m to start a new building company.

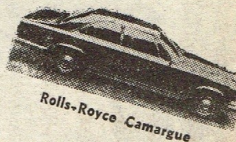


Mr Myles Callaghan, junr.



The Cushats, near Coyton, home of Mr Myles Callaghan, Junr.

Jaguar E-Type



Rolls-Royce Camargue



Lancia

Jaguar 4.2

Volkswagen Scirocco

Granada Chia

in the heart of Chapeltown, Hamilton Avenue, and was attended by about 40 people. We had coverage by Radio Leeds, and an Action Committee was set up which has since been pressing for improvements and action from councillors, Health Inspectors and Cleansing Dept. Inspectors.

In similar style, Action Committees have been set up in four other streets.

### Organising against the cuts

We had difficulty in one street, Reginald Terrace. We had to hold a second meeting

to get a reasonable response. The street is a massive Victorian terrace due for demolition in the Chapeltown Plan. Conditions are bad, and residents are depressed and demoralised. According to the Plan, demolition is due to start next month, but now it seems likely that the "financial crisis" will delay this for years. The Reginald Terrace Action Committee is trying to find out exactly what the council is playing at.

We intend spending the coming months setting up street committees throughout Chapeltown. Early in the new year we plan

to call a public meeting to look at the actions of all the street committees.

### Future action

We're pleased with the way things have gone so far. But we're alarmed, and our alarm is increasing. The Conservative Council in Leeds recently took £1 million off the repairs budget, and we have little doubt that this will hasten decay in areas like Chapeltown. So far the street committees have all chosen to take action which is lawful and to follow the 'correct procedures'. But as the cuts bite deeper, and when rents



are raised in October, we wonder whether this mood of tolerance will continue.

John Onyett, Secretary, Chapeltown Community Association, 62 Sholebrooke Avenue, Leeds LS7 3HE.

## Direct Works BAN LIFTED

A ban which for years has held back the growth of council direct labour departments has finally been lifted by the government. Direct labour departments may now bid for new construction contracts in other local authority areas. The Manchester direct works, for example, will now be able to operate in nearby Salford and Rochdale.



### Good record

This move should be of great benefit to Manchester's direct labour department, already one of the strongest in the country:

- \* it employs 5,000 building workers
- \* last year completed £25 m. worth of work
- \* has built 16,000 council houses, and flats in Manchester
- \* on these houses the repair

**New paper**

**TYNESIDE STREET PRESS.** Second issue now out contains articles and news on the development of Jarrow Slake, property companies involvement in the North Shields town centre redevelopment and in Newcastle and Gateshead's 'winners'. Price 5p plus postage from TSP, 118 Sydney Grove, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5PE.

bills were well below other Corporation houses.

Getting outside work will help direct labour departments to guarantee continuity of work, or even expand.

### Cuts bite

Yet in spite of this move, direct labour departments are being badly hit by the cuts in housing repair work and new building. The unions are currently refusing to accept 450 redundancies in South Tyneside direct work force of 600, due to cuts in the house-building and modernisation programme.

And attempts by Knowsley

Borough Council (Liverpool) to sack 180 men were met by strike action. There were 18,000 outstanding repair jobs to council homes, and work was going to private firms like Wimpeys and Cubitts. This was stopped, and an embargo put on all redundancies.

The government's boost to direct labour is therefore undermined severely by the cuts. Even so, the builders organisations, like the National Federation of Building Trades Employers, with their "Let Us Build" campaign, has suffered a severe setback! (See CA No. 26, p 15)

## STOP THE SALE OF COUNCIL HOUSES

A 16 page illustrated pamphlet for tenants and workers which looks at the current sales campaigns around the country and explains in detail why council houses must not be sold off under any circumstances and why land for council housing must not be sold to private builders.

It also covers why the housing lobby is demanding the sale of council houses and how this is only part of the attack on council housing. It outlines the action tenants and workers can take to stop all sales and to campaign to improve and expand council housing.

Sponsored by tenants associations and federations, Trades Councils, tenants campaigns and local Labour parties.

Available from late September

PRICE			
1 copy	— 6p	plus 9p post + packing	
10 copies	— 55p (save 5p)	plus 20p " "	
25 "	— £1.25p (save 25p)	plus 55p " "	
50 "	— £2.40p (save 60p)	plus 70p " "	
100 "	— £4.70p (save £1.30)	plus 85p " "	

SCAT, 159 Cleveland St, London W1. (01-387 1138)

# THE 'PEO

## Days of struggl

The period from mid-1970 to the election, Labour Government in February 1974 was on bristled with incident. A time of imagine thinking.

Among the glut of ideas being peddled one idea of a peoples place. Endless timewast arising from booking rooms and halls for purposes demonstrated the need for what P Place offers now. Union branches and ter anisations held their meetings in cramped and clubs provided they were willing to r cessive rents and provided that the landl were favourably disposed towards the grov aims.

Tenants, trade union branches and the Trs Council used the local Labour Party's hea quarters, Ede House. However, when these and organisations were at odds with the I Party, as they were over the Housing Fins Act, the Labour Party would seek to stiff osition. After all, it was their rooms, duplicator, and so on.

## Strike commit

We needed a place that was cheap, spacio and easy to get to. The place turned ou to be an old Unitarian church building, offered a large meeting hall (which cou about 350 people) and another smaller me room which could take about a hundred pe It also had two offices and a large kic Except for the need for repairs, it was fect. Once we'd obtained the building, repairs, decoration and cleaning followe Installation of phones, duplicator and c facilities came next. Within a couple o months the place was ready for use, and opened in the summer of 1972.

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# THE South Shields 'PEOPLE'S PLACE'

## Days of struggle

The period from mid-1970 to the election of the Labour Government in February 1974 was one which bristled with incident. A time of imaginative thinking.

Among the glut of ideas being peddled emerged the idea of a peoples place. Endless timewasting arising from booking rooms and halls for meeting purposes demonstrated the need for what People's Place offers now. Union branches and tenant organisations held their meetings in cramped pubs and clubs provided they were willing to meet excessive rents and provided that the landlords were favourably disposed towards the groups' aims.

Tenants, trade union branches and the Trades Council used the local Labour Party's headquarters, Ede House. However, when these groups and organisations were at odds with the Labour Party, as they were over the Housing Finance Act, the Labour Party would seek to stifle opposition. After all, it was their rooms, their duplicator, and so on.

## Strike committees

We needed a place that was cheap, spacious, and easy to get to. The place turned out to be an old Unitarian church building, which offered a large meeting hall (which could hold about 350 people) and another smaller meeting room which could take about a hundred people. It also had two offices and a large kitchen. Except for the need for repairs, it was perfect. Once we'd obtained the building, repairs, decoration and cleaning followed. Installation of phones, duplicator and office facilities came next. Within a couple of months the place was ready for use, and it opened in the summer of 1972.

We soon had reason to feel pleased with ourselves. The Claimants Union moved in. The Trades Council was using rooms for committee meetings and special meetings. Strikers from the local Plessey factory were using the place as a meeting place and strike headquarters. Peoples Place, as we called the building, looked set to become a very important centre

of activity. More important, it was a meeting place which was free from the control of people whose only interest was to make a profit. It was to be self-regulating, self-financing and non-bureaucratic, and it was to be run by its users for its users.

More and more groups were using the place. Tenants from a nearby clearance area, left groups, women's organisations and students were meeting regularly. The neighbourhood kids formed their own youth club and met twice



Tyneside Cuts Campaign

a week. Theatre groups staged pantomimes, plays and shows of one kind and another. We saw how useful the place could be in bringing groups together to share ideas and information. Groups of strikers without previous experience of striking would get in touch, arrange a meeting with the Claimants Union in order to find out the way in which the DHSS operated its "Anti-strike Code". They could then produce leaflets, bulletins and organise their strike activities.

## Fighting racism

Some groups were informal and temporary, and were intended to be so. An example was the South Tyneside Anti-Fascist Committee (STAFAC). The National Front had startled us locally, in the February 74 General Election, by obtaining almost 2,000 votes. People from Newcastle,



Hebburn and Jarrow came to Peoples Place in response to the call for anti-fascist action. Weekly meetings of STAFC were held. The Trades Council was contacted as were the trade union branches and shop stewards committees. A public meeting followed the announcement that there was to be an election in October, and that the NF were to field their candidate again. STAFC decided to leaflet the town, to campaign and lobby where it mattered. But none of the printers would agree to produce the leaflet. The election deadline neared.

STAFC used the facilities of Peoples Place, and produced and distributed more than 30,000 leaflets. Workplaces were leafleted direct. Shop stewards were given as much information as we had on the "Front". The NF vote plummeted from 2,000 to 711 votes. It was clear that without "Peoples" it would have been very difficult to get something of that scale off the ground.

## Becalmed!

Conceived at a time of industrial and political action by tenants and workers, and secured towards the end of that period, 'Peoples' has been an asset. We've seen some encouraging possibilities though we think it has much greater potential. The trouble is that those vessels of working class activity which were from 1970 to 1974 blazing away and firing broadsides to great effect are now becalmed.

The lull began, one suspects, nationally, with the election of Labour in February 1974. Their Parliamentary position marginally improved as a result of the October election, the Labour Government has spoken the language of consensus, of contract to an attentive and wooable trade union

leadership. Rank and file thunder has been muted. We are exhorted to believe in social wages, sacrifice and the Dunkirk spirit. The will to mobilize has evaporated; we look with dismay at the only thing that seems to be growing in the political area - the rise of the National Front. We're tooled up and ready to act, but if people won't come to 'Peoples' we must go to them. But how? People seem to respond to prods more orthodox in origin than our gently pushes and exhortations.

## Future action

We didn't have grand ambitions in setting up Peoples Place. We never saw it as being or becoming the focus of all action in South Shields or South Tyneside: we saw it as being an alternative worker centre from which socialist alternatives would develop. But the potential remains unfulfilled for there has been a swing back to the orthodox ways of taking action to the 'proper' channels of protest and expression. We've even seen the growth of Government-financed and backed agencies such as Community Development Projects, Resource Centres which can back protests against the cuts (until they themselves are cut!) and siphon off protest into institutionalised and harmless blow-off valves.

If we can't reach the people we want to reach and they don't appear to feel the need for us, where do we go from here? Do we revert to the established channels? Do we regard the lull as temporary respite and await the resurgence? These are just a couple of questions with which we've been wrestling recently. So far without reaching a decision as to what to do, but we'll have to decide soon.

People's Place, Derby Terrace, South Shields, Tyne and Wear. Tel. 08943-65062



Some of the 400 tenants and trade unionists who demonstrated against the National Front in East London



# community festivals



Recent festivals in Longsight, Manchester;  
Pimlico, Fitzrovia and Islington  
in London; Derry,  
Northern Ireland.



# SLASH

## Cuts in new council housing

Well, they've done it at last : the Labour government has slain the sacred cow of Labour policy - new council house building. After the total freeze on new council house building imposed on July 22nd, as part of the £1,000 million cuts package (see page 28), Reg Freeson, Minister for Housing and Construction, announced in early August that controls were to be introduced to reduce the number of council houses local authorities are allowed to build. This reduction will mean a drop from the present annual rate of about 115,000 starts a year to a tightly controlled 100,000.

Council home loans allocation has also been cut, and new housing association building is to be brought under the new system of controls.

The government claims that councils are 'overspending' on house building and housing subsidies at a rate that would mean that in 1977/78 public spending on housing would be £100 million higher than planned in the White Paper on public expenditure. This has been the basis for the continuing claim that "no cuts have been made". The reality of the situation is very different.

### 'Priority areas'

\* Every new council housing scheme will now have to be submitted to the relevant Regional Office of the Dept. of the Environment before tenders for the work can be invited from private builders or from council direct works departments.

\* The total number of new building starts will be cut by the DoE in two ways :

1 The DoE has drawn up a list of 61 "stress authorities" in England, based partly on the 1971 Census figures on overcrowding and sharing of amenities, and partly on 'information' from the Regional Offices. These authorities will be regarded as priority areas for

receiving the necessary permission to go ahead with expenditure on new housebuilding.

2 The government's aim is to immediately reduce the number of new council homes started each month from the present rate (ie. pre-July) of about 9,000 a month to a new level of 6,000 a month. The 61 'chosen' authorities will be allowed first call on this quota, while the remaining non-priority areas will have to make out a special case to be allowed to take up any 'spare' housing starts left over after the allocation is made to the priority areas. Between September and the end of this year, councils will be allowed to invite tenders on 24,000 new council homes. This will be increased slightly during 1977 so that a total of 90,000 houses could be started in England. Taking 1976 and 1977 together, starts are supposed to average 100,000 a year.

\* Between January and May of this year, council house starts were actually running at an annual rate of 115,000. As recently as May, Freeson was telling councils he visited on a round-Britain tour that "there is no restraint whatsoever on new building", and telling fellow MPs that "resources would be provided to sustain the present level of housebuilding".

## Figures out of a hat

And yet the government has now done a double somersault and is saying that the White Paper estimates only allowed for 100,000 starts per year - although this figure was not stated in the White Paper. Not only are they not maintaining the present level of 115,000 starts, but they are also using the magic figure of 100,000 as the basis of the argument that there is no cut!

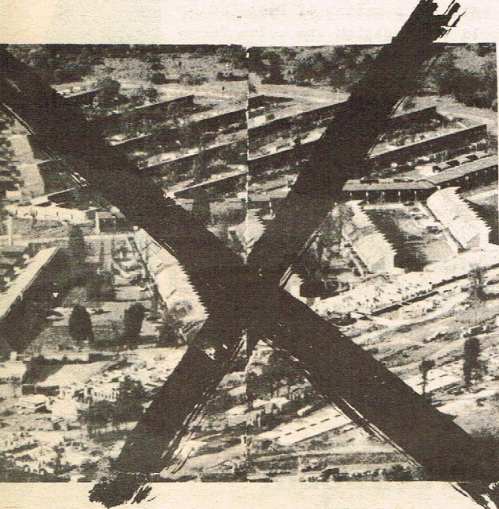
In fact, because the list of stress areas includes most of the metropolitan housing authorities, (with some glaring omissions), it is likely that the total quota of housing starts will be taken up by those stress areas, leaving nothing for the vast majority of councils. This means that council house building in places like Coventry, St. Helens, Rochdale and many other towns will come to a complete standstill.



# ED!

"The series of visits I am making is designed to provide a means of getting larger housing programmes under way... there is no restraint whatsoever on new building".  
 Reg Freeson, Minister of Housing  
 May 17th 1976

Of course the stress areas approach is a nonsense. As Shelter has shown in a report produced in response to the cuts,\* every area in the country has a housing problem - the total number of households on council waiting lists in England is now a staggering 1.1 million. Shelter's report contains information on the simplest measures of housing need from every English housing authority.



## Disaster for the future

Any pretence of this being only a temporary setback is given the lie by the fact that the new controls have been introduced for councils' purchase of land for housing as well. Councils no longer have the right to acquire land for council housebuilding in the future: each individual purchase will now be vetted by the DoE, and presumably refused, unless the council can prove that it needs the land NOW for a housing scheme that is likely to be approved under the new control on starts. This cut is storing up disaster for future public house building activity.

\* "The Case Against the Housing Cuts" Shelter.  
 157, Waterloo Rd. London SE1 Tel: 01 633 9377.

## Community facilities

The new controls also apply to spending on community facilities related to housing schemes.

## Home loans

£145 million has been cut off the budget for council loans to low-income house buyers. Councils are only to be allowed to spend 85% of the original White Paper allocation for this financial year. The government is "continuing to make efforts" to get the Building Societies to loan more to the sort of house buyers who can normally only turn to local authorities for mortgages.

## Municipalisation

All the signs are that spending on municipalisation in 1977/78 is now going to be subject to strict control in the same way as council spending on improvement work (the notorious 'section 105' approach). Freeson is to give councils an allocation for this, and for public and private improvement spending, in the Autumn.

## Unemployment

Building workers unions have forecast a worsening situation for building workers because of the latest cuts. At least another 40,000 are expected to be unemployed as a direct result of the cuts, on top of the 260,000 already out of work.

## Wales

The freeze on new building, imposed at the time of the English one, has also been lifted in Wales. However, the new limits or means of control have not yet been announced. There will definitely be cuts in new building, it is likely that Welsh councils will be given a cash ceiling by the Welsh Office to limit their spending on new housing. In the meantime, and for the rest of this financial year, councils are going to have to scramble for the remaining money in the 76/77 budget, and for approval to go ahead with planned schemes.

We will include more details on Wales and Scotland in the next issue.



# DON'T WAIT FOR ORGANISE NOW!

## FUEL BOSSES BLOW FUSE OVER DISCONNECTIONS

The gas and electricity industries called it a 'scroungers charter'. The Secretary of the Electrical Power Engineers Association said it would 'demoralize' electricity industry staff. And local Right to Fuel campaigns welcomed it as a possible first sign of a radical policy on fuel bill problems. They were all reacting to the recommendation, in a recent government report, that the fuel boards should lose the right to cut off gas and electricity to households unable to pay their fuel bills.

A few weeks before the Oakes Report, the National Consumer Council had also brought out a report calling for the fuel industries to lose their special right to disconnect fuel supplies and instead to have to go through the courts to claim fuel debts. The Electricity Council and the Gas Corporation received prime TV time for their condemnation of this suggestion, and with lightning speed, calculated that such a move would immediately add 10% to the price of gas and electricity.

So the debate continued in the press for a few days, and the fuel industries, hot-footed it to the Dept of Energy to tell Tony Benn what they thought of the idea. All waited with bated breath to see if official blessing would be given to the no-disconnection recommendation. Finally the government announced its policy on fuel bills on August 2nd.

### First the good news...

"Government to give £25m for winter power bills", the headlines said. Discounts on the cost of electricity(not gas) were to be given to people receiving Supplementary Benefit and Family Income Supplement. That was good news. However, the boards were to be allowed to go on using disconnection against "reckless" consumers, but a "code of practice" would be developed to prevent people having their heat and light cut

off because of poverty. (The cynical would say that the fuel boards already claim that they don't disconnect in cases of hardship.)

### Then the bad news

But where was this £25m to come from when public expenditure is being slashed back? Well, as a matter of fact, as Mr Benn told the Scottish and Welsh TUC Conferences, because of lower electricity consumption (nothing to do with disconnections, we presume), there is a rather large coal mountain lying around in various pits and coal yards at the moment. Thirty million tons of it, to be exact. So, in order to increase the demand for this coal, it will be available to the electricity industry at reduced rates, and in order to increase the demand for the electricity produced by this coal, poor consumers will be encouraged to use more electricity than they dared to last year, and then receive a discount on their bills. Very neat! Of course, no one yet seems to know how big the discounts will be, or how long they will last.

### The truth about 'scroungers'

The fuel industries have been at pains to point out that they are commercial organisations, not welfare agencies. But they also claim that they are not cutting off gas and electricity supplies to people 'at risk', or already suffering hardship. However, local Right to Fuel and heating campaigns have collected overwhelming evidence to show that all over the country households in severe 'hardship' are in fact being disconnected. They are people whose incomes are so low that the only way they can meet rising fuel bills and avoid disconnection is by splitting up the family and sending the kids into care, or by endangering their lives by using too little heat, or by cutting back on food for the family.

DEARER FUEL

COAL  
PROPERTY OF THE  
DO NOT  
UNTIL





# WINTER...

## TENANTS' FIGHT GETS RID OF DISTRICT HEATING

At least one tenants association has campaigned successfully to force the council to scrap both the district heating system and Clorius Meters - that is the Humber Road T.A. in Witham, Essex. As reported in the last issue of C/A, Braintree District Council has now agreed to rip out the gas fired district heating system and replace it with individually controlled gas boilers to each house. This also means that the Clorius Metering system will be abandoned.

The Tenants Association has sent us this report on the history of their campaign, and "hopes that it will encourage others, both tenants associations and councils, to realise that these problems can be overcome".

### Vibrations in Witham

The Humber Road Estate was built in the early 1970s by the then Witham Urban Council, as an 'overspill' estate for London. The first tenants moved in in late 1972. With local government re-organisation, the estate passed over to Braintree District Council in 1974.

The entire estate is served by a central gas boiler house, supplying hot water for domestic use and for heating by radiators, both being monitored by 'Clorius Meters'. The hot water is delivered to each block of dwellings by underground steel pipes, covered with a 'plastic' insulation. Each individual household is then supplied by a 'take-off' pipe, coming from the secondary mains pipe traversing the entire block through each loft.

From the start complaints were made about the high noise levels caused by the water passing along the pipe in the loft and the high vibratory noise from the take-off pipe in certain areas of the estate. Apologies from the Council were received but the excuse was that because the Estate was still only half-filled, an 'imbalance' was created in the system, but that this would stop once more residents arrived.

However, problems with the heating system got worse. Tenants frustration at

the leaking radiators, continuing noise, erratic 'meter readings', poor maintenance and high charges all led to the formation of the Tenants Association in October 1974.

### Steam bath on the lawn

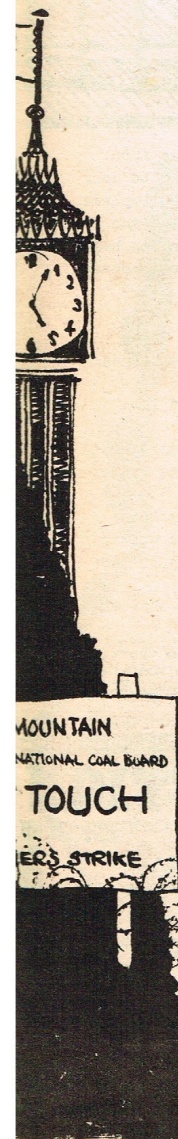
At the first General Meeting, Councillors and council officers were asked to attend so that the complaints could be aired and, it was hoped, action taken. The outcome was disappointing: very few direct answers were given to direct questioning. So we decided to take further action, also to contact Clorius Meters directly, to try to get many of these complaints answered.

Meanwhile the first indication that the mains underground pipes were faulty was a tenant reporting steam coming from the earth in his back garden in September 1974. Neighbours in the same block reporting losses of plants, turf, etc. due to no apparent reason. The tenant came home from work one evening to find a large hole in his back garden, without prior notice, a hastily scribbled note of apology on the door.

In March 1975 tenants served by the faulty pipe were told that all their back gardens would have to be dug up so that the pipe could be replaced; eight tenants would be affected. This work would take six weeks. No reference was made to tenants loss of their gardens, plants, lawns and amenities. When the council refused to meet tenants' requests for a promise of compensation or replacement of plants, etc. lost, we decided on a sit-in to prevent the workmen from working. When the Council was informed of our intentions and our contact with the local press, they were then willing to meet us and meet our demands. The work started in May, did not finish until August, compensation finally being paid in November.

### The problem gets worse

In December 1975 the first of a series of major breakdowns occurred, affecting the whole Estate. Heating and hot water were both cut off many times during the winter months. After many calls for





action and to safeguard the health of young children and the elderly, the Council supplied the Association with electric fires, which we distributed to those in need. Flooding of premises occurred due to the behaviour of the heating system. People became afraid to leave their homes for any length of time because of this. Doctors reported a high rise in ill health, colds, flu and migraine, etc. A new hazard became evident because of the breakdowns, the pumps went out of balance, causing heavy vibration and increasing the noise level.

As if this was not enough, in February the Council sent the 'Clorius' bills for the 1974/5 period and due to the high rise in gas prices the bills were much higher, but even worse, were more erratic than the previous year!

### Tenants refuse to pay

At an emergency General Meeting, tenants resolved not to pay these excessive charges until the Council undertook to renew or replace the present system, check the 'Clorius' charges, compensate tenants for alternative heating bills, repay some of the weekly 'standing charge' that tenants have had to pay whilst receiving no heat or hot water.

At about this time, news about the Long-sight tenants' campaign against 'Clorius' meters appeared in the press. This strengthened our suspicions about the accuracy of these 'meters'.

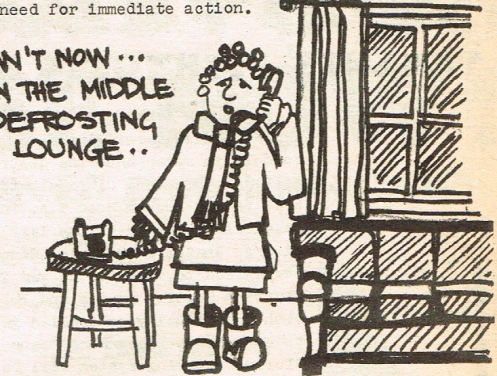
### Council convinced

The Council's attitude to the Association's efforts to get action fortunately changed. Both councillors and council officers expressed concern and promised action. At a Housing Services Committee

## heating campaigns

meeting the Association's Chairman was able to convince the councillors of the seriousness of the situation, the mood of the tenants and of the need for immediate action.

... CAN'T NOW ...  
I'M IN THE MIDDLE  
OF DEFROSTING  
THE LOUNGE ..



Investigations by the Council themselves into the district heating system and Clorius Ltd convinced them that it was more economic to replace the system than attempt to renew it. Also the literature received from the Longsight tenants helped us to convince the Council that 'Clorius' meters were suspect.

In the course of the negotiations over these problems during March and April the Council agreed to:

- 1 halve all the surcharges as received from Clorius;
- 2 pay each tenant £25 towards alternative heating costs due to the district heating system failures;
- 3 provide adequate alternative heating/hot water systems by winter 1976 (work is due to start in the middle of August to rip out the present system and meters);
- 4 hold regular meetings with council officers to discuss problem.

All the above agreements have come into operation.

Contact: Mrs M Phillips, 12 Medway Avenue, Witham, Essex.

## HELP TO SELL COMMUNITY ACTION

Please fill in the form below. We will send you some C/A posters and information sheets describing C/A aims together with a list of contents of back issues. Each issue of C/A will be sent on a sale or return basis. We must however have payment and unsold copies returned on a regular basis.

### Please send me

\_\_\_ 6 copies of C/A  
\_\_\_ 9 copies of C/A  
\_\_\_ 12 copies of C/A  
\_\_\_ specify

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Community Action, P.O. Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ



- \* Do you live in a council house or flat with its own central heating or which is part of a district heating system (where a central boiler services the whole area)?
- \* Do you suffer from huge bills, faults and breakdowns, no control over the temperature, unreliable or dangerous metering systems?
- \* Are you trying to contact other groups with similar problems?

Community Action has had many requests for help with:  
 technical advice and where to get it.  
 contacting other heating campaigns.  
 exchanging information and experience.

For example, groups fighting the notorious Clorius metering system have made contact through the magazine and there is now a national network of groups fighting on this issue.

We want to do more in this direction - the need is obviously there. So we are putting together a...

## HEATING SYSTEMS ACTION PACK

for tenants associations and heating action groups. It will include:

- \* Articles and news items from back issues of Community Action and other sources, (including some technical articles) on heating systems, Clorius meters, district heating problems, and local action against them.
- \* A list of reports/information produced by tenants on heating systems. Information about the profits, directors etc. of some of the major heating firms.
- \* A list of tenants associations and heating action groups (with a short description of the sort of heating system they have) willing to exchange information and experience with other groups.
- \* A list of groups who are trying to contact others.

### WE NEED YOUR HELP

Send us your associations name, address, phone number if possible, and any other relevant information about your heating system if you want to get in touch with other tenants groups. Send us a copy of any reports/information you have produced on your heating system which you think may be useful to others. (Don't forget to give the price including postage). Send us an account of how your campaign is going, with successes and failures, do's and don'ts for other groups.

Tell other tenants who don't see the magazine that we are trying to widen the network of heating contacts, and ask them to get in touch with us.

The ACTION PACK will be advertised in the next issue of C/A at cost price. If you are writing to us, could you let us know whether your association might want copies of the ACTION PACK.

Send your information/reports etc. by OCTOBER 1st to:  
 Community Action Magazine,  
 P O Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ.  
 or phone: 01 235 3465 (evenings & w/ends only).

DON'T WAIT FOR WINTER  
**ORGANISE NOW**





## HUNSLET CRUMBLES but tenants fight on

The Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group (HGHA) have been campaigning since January on the issue of high heating costs in our all-electric flats. During this time we have stressed that:

- \* the deplorable living conditions - damp, draughts, etc. are a result of the structural inadequacies of the development.

- \* the residents of Hunslet Grange are not only having to pay the recent unreasonable price increases in electricity but also are being further penalised because of the structural faults in the flats, and the badly maintained and possibly inadequate central heating system.

### Tenants reject 'experiment'

In February, by demonstrating and petitioning, we forced the council to prepare a report on the problems of heating and condensation in the flats. We offered to help the council with the report because we were worried they would avoid examining the problems of the structure. Our offer was refused, so we decided to prepare our own report: "Hunslet Grange: An Experiment and Its Victims". The report tells of how residents are suffering as victims of the factory-built systems experiments of the 60's, how the council has rebuffed the approaches of HGHA to involve the residents in finding a solution, and how the recently completed damp remedial programme has had a failure rate of 43% (that is, damp has returned to just under half the flats treated) after only one winter. The main purpose of the report was to try to show the linkages between the structure and the deteriorating living conditions.

We are not experts on building construction, but some of the members of the group were prepared to dig out architectural and building journals from the 1960's when systems building, because of the low labour costs and speed of erection, was seen as the answer to the housing problem. We also talked to an architect, an environmental health officer, a building surveyor and, perhaps most important, some people who had actually worked on the flats. We began to see linkages between condensation and thick concrete walls which the central heating system could not warm; between penetrating damp and draughts and the movement of the structure. We could not prove these linkages but we were sure that they needed investigation. The conclusions of the report were:

### demands

"We want:

- \* A full analysis of the structure of the flats and its relationship to the deteriorating living conditions. This should include an analysis of the design of the construction techniques, the materials, and the specifications of design and construction.

- \* An appraisal of previous structural repairs carried out giving details of why necessary, their cost, the amount of disturbance to residents and their success.

- \* An evaluation of possible solutions using the following criteria: cost (including compensation to residents), sources of finance, disturbance to residents, methods of implementation (including resident involvement), time scale."

We sent a copy of the report to every member of the Housing Committee and to the press, just before



the meeting at which the committee were to discuss the officers' report. The Chairman introduced the council's report by saying that it was of course only an interim report and that they would be going to look at the possible structural problems of the flats. Full discussion of our report was to be held over until the next meeting.

## Council blames residents

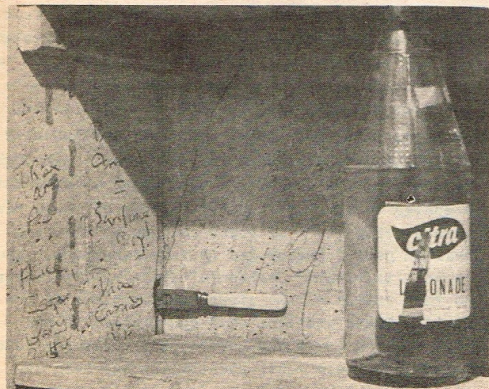
The officers' report presented at the meeting makes no mention of being interim or of a further structural report. In fact it starts out dealing with the structure of the flats, the problems and the remedial work that had been carried out over the years. There is also a section on the increases in electricity costs and the heating system. But when it gets to the conclusions suddenly everything is the fault of the residents for not using the heating system properly, for not cleaning the extractor fans, or generally not adapting themselves adequately to the living technology of the 1970's.

We suspect that while the body of the report comes from the Architects Department, the conclusions were drawn up by the Management Committee or the Conservation Group.

## Engineer offers help

Just after we released our report we received a letter from an engineer saying he had read about our campaign in the "Leeds Other Paper" and was concerned that the problems we mentioned might be symptoms of serious defects in the structure of the flats which could lead them to be unsafe. He was particularly worried about the draughts under the skirting boards. These he felt were caused by the breaking up of the 'dry-pack' in the joints between the walls and floor slabs, thus allowing draughts and water to penetrate the flats.

Drypack is concrete forced under pressure into the joints between the slabs to hold them together.



deep crack between load bearing wall and gable end

It is meant to be monolithic, that is, like a single piece of stone - it shouldn't crack or crumble. It is the most important part of the structure. It holds everything together, like the frame of an ordinary building. Now, although the joints between the wall and floor slabs are not structural joints, it is reasonable to believe that the same specifications and standards of supervision were used on the structural joints and therefore that they too are likely to be crumbling. If this is so, the flats could be in danger of collapse.

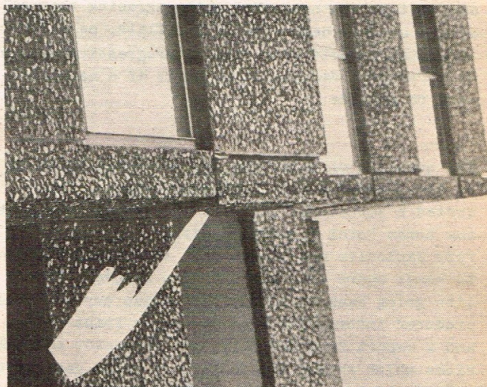


photo shows deck access balcony is out of line

The engineer and two of his colleagues were due to give a talk on failures in structures to some students in Leeds. We arranged for them to look at Hunslet Grange and as part of a WEA course in the area, to talk to residents about what they found. We also invited the press and, because of some advance publicity, one member of the Housing Committee came. The engineer saw enough in the flats to confirm his theory that structural joints might be weakening and that an immediate investigation was needed. His colleague, an architect, who was particularly interested in fires and explosions, found cracks between the floor slabs which would allow smoke and fumes to pass from one flat to another. The flats, thus, did not meet the fire regulations. He was also concerned about the possibility of an explosion in the flats.

## A 2nd Ronan Point?

Town gas had been taken out of the flats after the Ronan Point collapse. But, now, because of the high electricity bills and people having their supplies cut off, calor gas is being used in the flats for cooking and heating. In fact, it was being given out by Social Services. The architect argued that an explosion of a calor gas cylinder could lead to a Ronan Point-type collapse in Hunslet Grange.

Following the publicity these statements received, the Chairman of the Housing Committee asked for written reports by the engineer and architect on what they had seen at the flats. The reports they sent concluded by recommending that an independent



Investigation should be carried out by someone appointed by the President of the Institute of Structural Engineers. After the Chairman received the reports, he asked West Yorkshire County Council to send a Fire Prevention Officer and a structural engineer to inspect the flats. They looked only at the 3 flats in the engineer's and architect's report.

The Fire Prevention Officer's report was ready for the July Housing Committee meeting. The report confirmed the risk of fumes and smoke passing from one flat to another. But while agreeing that calor gas was not desirable in the flats, he did not think there would be a risk of progressive collapse or structural damage in the flats if a cannister were to explode.

## More 'interim' reports?

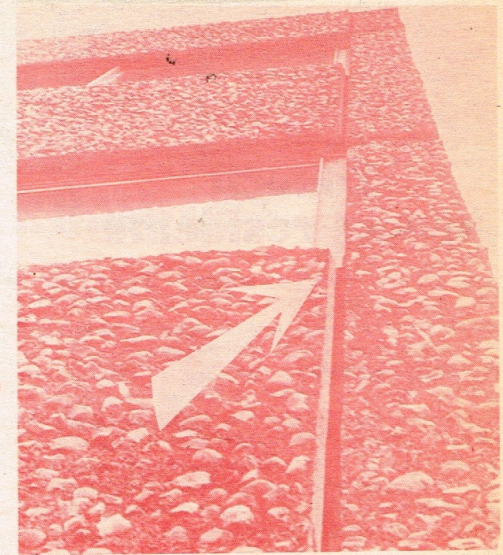
The question of calor gas explosion was taken up by the trade journal 'Building Design'. They quoted a structural engineer who gave evidence at the Ronan Point inquiry as saying bottled gas is very explosive and it was daft to introduce it into homes where town gas had been removed. "It's like going back to square one", Also our architect produced information from the Ronan Point Report and a report from Her Majesty's Inspector of Explosions which showed the dangers of calor gas. After some initial confusion about retractions by the Fire Service Department and Housing Chairman, the Fire Officer's report suddenly became - wait for an interim report.



Heating Group Demonstration  
- see Community Action No. 24.

The structural engineer's report wasn't ready for the July Housing Committee but was promised in a week or so. The following week we found the estate had been invaded by 40 officers from the Housing Department doing a door-to-door survey of the 1250 flats asking residents about cracks in walls and ceilings, and any other defects.

If there were any cracks, one of a team of 14 structural engineers would visit the flat to check on the seriousness of them. The Housing Chairman hoped the report would be available for the July Council meeting. It wasn't and we're still waiting. We do know that the pilot survey on a block of 49 flats, showed that  $\frac{1}{2}$  had cracks and that 5 residents were using calor gas and one paraffin, though only one had had their electricity cut off.



In the meantime the engineer and architect have continued their investigations as a basis for evaluating the Council's report when it is finally produced. We also asked the Council to include the following information in their report: calculations, drawings of joints and structures on which the calculations were based, results of any tests carried out, measurements for trueness of structure and a list of all the flats visited and details of findings. We want this information to check their conclusions. However, such a report can be no substitute for a fully independent inquiry and this is what we are still demanding.

## Tenants make the connection

In the space of a month HGHAG went from making fumbling linkages between our deteriorating living conditions and the structure of the flats, to being at the centre of an issue which could affect thousands of tenants around the country. Throughout the time when the safety aspects have been in the headlines, we have continually made the connections with the high heating costs and living conditions in the flats. This was particularly important with the danger of calor gas. Although recognising the dangers of calor gas, we were not prepared to start or support a purge of those residents using it. Our press release at the time read in part: "Calor gas is very dangerous. Leeds Council is risking residents' lives by its failure to take action on the structural problems of the flats. These problems have contributed to the high heating costs and forced many residents into a position where their electricity has been cut off or they have had to find a cheaper alternative form of heating, for example, calor gas."



## heating campaigns

"Damp, draughts, and deteriorating living conditions will continue in the flats this winter. To remove the danger of explosion through calor gas the Council must ensure that:

★ all residents who are disconnected have their electricity supply put back on.

★ a subsidy is made available to residents to cover their high heating costs so as to reduce the need for calor gas appliances."

## It's still residents' campaign

Also as the campaign has become more technical we have had to work out our relationship with the engineer and architect. Fortunately they both see the campaign as being ours, and that the group is the political force to bring about change. The press, which has given us a lot of coverage, does tend to focus on them, but in reality they act as our advisors and all tactics, press releases, reports are jointly discussed and implemented. The engineer had previously been involved in a similar issue on his own and got nowhere because he lacked the political base of the residents being directly involved.

There is much more involved in this story of the safety of systems-built dwellings and the wider implications. We are still awaiting the Council's technical report and the political decisions to be made on it. In the meantime we will give whatever help we can to other groups who think their dwellings may have similar problems. Later we hope to produce a guide to assist other residents in examining their dwellings and in campaigning for action.

Postscript: The Council has now produced its own technical report. More on the latest developments in the next issue of C/A.

\* Copies of 'Hunslet Grange: An Experiment and Its Victims' from 16 Askern Chase, Leeds 10 35p plus 9p postage.

All photos: John Fitzgerald-Hooper

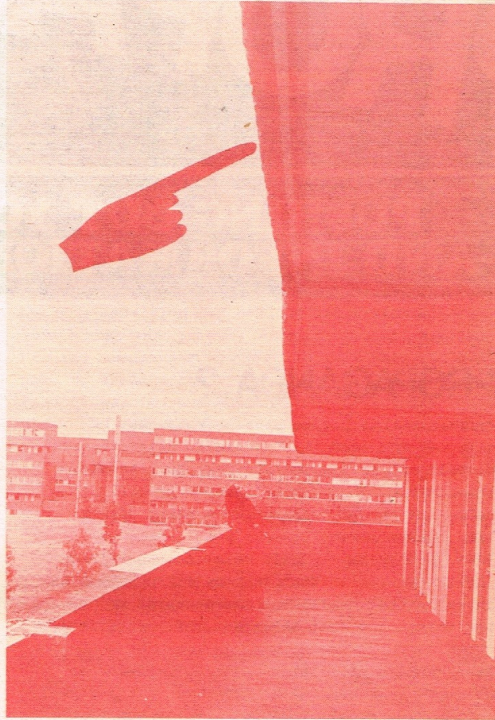


Photo shows balcony panels bending outwards.

**TO ALL TENANTS ASSOC. & FEDERATIONS,  
COMMUNITY PROJECTS, CUTS CAMPAIGNS,  
TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS:**

## ★ WE ARE SELLING THE **Fight the Attack on Council Housing** PACKAGES IN BULK ORDERS OF 6 OR 12

It's vital that tenants and workers understand and take action on the real issues which affect council housing.

★ Each package consists of copies of C/A Nos. 24, 25 & 26 (50 pages full of information on rents, who makes money out of council housing, tenants rights, community facilities, tenants campaigns, the housing lobby, tenant control, the housing market and much more) plus 2 "Facts and Fantasy" posters, one C/A poster "Fight the Attack on Council Housing", costs 55p inc. post.

★ BUT WITH BULK ORDERS: 6 Packages cost £2.90 inc postage SAVE 40p !  
12 Packages cost £2.25 inc postage SAVE £1.35 !



# The PROPAGANDA Battle

## PUSHING OUT YOUR OWN NEWS AND INFORMATION: WHY AND HOW

### ACTION NOTES NO 6

#### PROPAGANDA..?

Propaganda has become a dirty word, but no other single word can be used to describe the activity of trying to convince other people of the truth of what you believe to be right. We're surrounded by propaganda every day, but the industrialists and the politicians call their propaganda 'public relations' or 'informing the public'. What they call propaganda is anything that challenges the accepted way of seeing things and that threatens their interests.

Propaganda - explaining what you're doing and why - is an essential activity for all community action groups. It includes keeping your own members informed of the issues, the facts, and the latest developments. It also includes efforts to gain wider support and to counteract the avalanche of propaganda both from those opposing your interests and from the local and national media.

These Notes show some of the ways you can put your case across, and some of the things you should think about before deciding what is the best way of doing it.

#### WHO FOR?

YOUR GROUP MEMBERS need to know:

- \* the real issues : eg, why it's necessary to organise, what the Cuts mean locally - how the closure of the local hospital will affect them and why it's unnecessary; what the glossy plan for the area really means; why the area is like it is, where the real power lies, who profits and how things can be changed.
- \* what the group is doing and why: e.g., who is responsible for doing what- why delay and obstruction means stronger action is necessary; how their efforts have led to victory;

- \* the arguments and figures to use against lies and misinformation: whose pockets the rent rises end up in; how divide-and-rule racialism is based on lies.

THE WIDER PUBLIC need to know:

- \* what your demands are and why you're making them;
  - \* how the issue affects them;
  - \* how they can support you.
- THE OPPOSITION need to know:
- \* that you're organised and determined to win;
  - \* that you know the facts and can't be misled.

REMEMBER: THE PROPAGANDA BATTLE IS HALF THE FIGHT.

#### WHY YOU CAN'T TRUST THE MEDIA

The privately-owned press and 'independent' (?) radio and television companies are owned by financiers whose interests are completely opposed to those of the working class. As in many other industries under private control, ownership of the press has become concentrated into fewer and fewer hands: chances are that your 'local' paper is owned by a company that owns a chain of papers.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Nine newspaper groups control all national papers. Three of these groups account for over 80% of total circulation. Seven of the groups are controlled directly or indirectly by individual families. In 1974 63% of the voting shares in Southern TV were held by press groups, as were 43% in ATV. In 1974 58% of all provincial dailies were owned by six powerful groups.

\*\*\*\*\*



When is the last time you read a newspaper which said that wealth should be more equally shared, that council housing should be built to higher standards, that black and white should join together to fight for jobs and houses for all? The state-owned media, the BBC, has a reputation for 'balance'. But whose interests get 'balanced'? Most of the press releases, the reports, the publicity, the research, the public statements that make up the news are made by the people who can pay for them: the owner, the interest groups and the state. The concerns and the interests of working people don't get equal treatment, because they don't have equal resources. And most of the people who staff the BBC have nice jobs and comfortable lives and won't see much reason to fight for change.

## BIAS

Every day brings examples of the bias and distortion of the media. A few recent glaring examples:

▶ the papers were going on about people on the dole basking in the sun in Spain - but in fact nobody was doing it. Do you hear about the expense-account luxury holidays enjoyed by the bosses who plan an economy where a million and a half are jobless and pinching pennies to try to live on the dole?

▶ You hear about the unions always 'holding the nation to ransom'. What about the blackmail of the financiers withholding needed investment from industry, or the doctors threatening to emigrate?

▶ You've heard a chorus of spokesmen for government, industry and the TUC agree on the need for cuts. How much newspaper space and radio and television time has been given to the case against the cuts?

But the bias is also more subtle. Look carefully at how words are used - words like 'extremists' and 'moderates', 'scroungers' and 'vandals', or even things like whose statements are described as 'claims' and whose as 'facts'. Look at how a film star's latest divorce is given a page spread, while a Right to Work demonstration is given a paragraph - if it is mentioned at all. And have you ever noticed just how few people you hear on radio and television chat shows sound as if they know for instance - or care - what it's like to work in a factory or have the council for a landlord?

## MONOPOLY

The crunch point is this: if you repeat something often enough most people will believe it, and if 99 people believe something it's very hard for the 100th to disagree. Therefore it is crucial, especially NOW, to let people know about the facts and ideas that the media keep quiet about. If there are no alternatives it is only natural to believe the present national news sources. And in many places there are NO alternatives at all.

## PLANNING YOUR PROPAGANDA BATTLE

Getting your message across isn't something that should be left to the last minute for Fred to think about after everybody else has gone home. It should be a central part of the activities of your group, from the beginning. A few of the things you need to think about:

**1. What are your aims?** Are you planning a short campaign on a single issue, or organising a tenants' association or community group to bring people together to discuss and fight for the needs of the area? In the first case your best bet might be posters, leaflets, public meetings. In the second you might want to think about your own regular news-sheet or community newspaper.

**2. Who is your message aimed at and what do they need to know?** You may need to let everyone in your group know exactly what the Council's plans for the area means to them. In that case you may have to spend a lot of time in detailed face-to-face discussion and explanation. Or you may decide that your campaign would be helped if your demands were more widely known. In that case you may have to try to get publicity through the local press or radio. You may have to let the Council know that you're organised and angry and the best way of doing that may be a demonstration. Or you may feel you can win your case at an inquiry if the inspector knew the real facts. In that case you may need to prepare a well-researched and clearly written report.





**3. What are your resources?**  
Turninh out and distributing a newspaper takes a hell of a lot of work, and the energies of your group might be better used in another way. On the other hand you may find that members of your group have skills and knowledge about silk-screen printing or photography or speech-making etc, which you won't know about unless you ask.

**4. The need to act quickly:** If you're attacked in the press or inaccurately reported you may want to get the press to put the facts right. You'll have to respond immediately or the issue won't be 'news' any longer. And if your supporters are being demoralised by malicious rumours they have to be stopped right away.

**5. Getting through to your audience:** Not everybody takes in ideas best through the printed word, and page after page of dry facts can put anybody off. Films, plays, tape and slide shows, photo displays, can often be more effective ways of getting the message across.

**6. Getting people involved:** One of your aims may be to get people thinking about the problems of the area and to put forward their ideas. Making a video film can be a good way of doing this.

**7. Distribution:** An organised and efficient distribution system is essential to the success of a community newspaper or news-sheet and should be planned before you start writing your first issue. And there's little point in making a film if there's no place or opportunity to show it.

**8. Follow-up is essential:** Have you reached the people you were aiming to reach? Have they understood what you were saying and did they find it convincing? What can you do better next time? And have you told Community Action and other groups about the lessons you learned and about your successes (and failures)?

## Who are the real scroungers?

How many of these points have made the headlines in your daily?

**£1,300m** lost through gaping loopholes in the death duty laws.  
Source: Child Poverty Action Group

**£500m** lost through self-employed people wrongly under-estimating their income.  
Source: Inland Revenue Staff Federation

**£134m** currently missing through V.A.T. evasion - estimated **£103m** lost per year.  
Source: Financial Times 8 July 1976

**£20m** taxes "unrecoverable" - e.g. **£9m** of this lost through taxpayers leaving the country without settling their tax bills.  
Source: Child Poverty Action Group

**£19.6m** sought by the Inland Revenue from companies wrongly under-estimating their profits.  
Source: Inland Revenue Staff Federation

(Doesn't include the latest company tax dodge - making fake loans and then claiming tax relief on the non-existent interest charges - which probably accounts for **£100m**)  
Source: Sunday Times Business News

**£2.1m** lost through all forms of Social Security fraud - Unemployment, Sickness, Maternity and Widows' Benefits; Retirement Pensions, Industrial Injury and Supplementary Benefit  
Source: Hansard, 24 May 1976

ALL FIGURES EXCEPT V.A.T. & 'LATEST DODGE' REFER TO 1974/75

### Or these..?

The following estimates were circulated to all the national press by the Child Poverty Action Group.

550,000 pensioners eligible for Supplementary Benefits  
DO NOT CLAIM  
360,000 families eligible for Supplementary Benefits  
DO NOT CLAIM  
65-70% unfurnished tenants eligible for Rent Allowances  
DO NOT CLAIM  
80% furnished tenants eligible for Rent Allowances  
DO NOT CLAIM

This is to say nothing of the headline levels of most benefits, and the humiliating conditions attached to them. In fact what lurks behind the headline hysteria is the old lie: if you're not working, you're shirking.

It insults the 1½ million workers who are jobless because this Labour government has capitulated to the demands of financiers and industrialists for massive welfare cuts and mass unemployment.

And the final insult: this is how they've been able to find **£3,400m** for British industrialists - to restore their falling profits!



# DOLE, DOLE

**Fury over 'Spain on the dole' reports**  
**DOLE**  
**DOUS JOKE OF SPAIN on the DOLE**

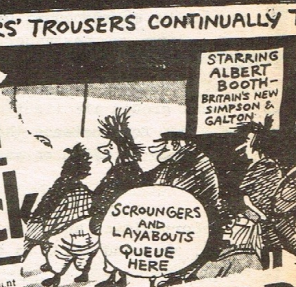
FORWARD WITH THE PEOPLE

## Stop thief!

**EVERYBODY'S ON THE BIG FIDDLE—TO THE TUNE OF A BILLION**

By JOHN KAY  
BRITAIN is a nation of fiddlers, stealing an amazing billion pounds-plus every year.  
A university research team said yesterday that the pilfering costs about £1,395 million a year.  
They estimate that...

## Minister rages over Costa del Scrounge attack



**Can you believe that all these people earn too little to pay tax?**

## BIG NEW WAR ON THE DOLE QUEUE CHEATS

UNDERCOVER investigators are spearheading a war on social-security fiddlers — infiltrating dole queues, quelling employers, and studying reports on work-shy drawn up by Job Centre managers.  
The cloak-and-dagger teams are being helped by an amount of information about fiddlers which is pouring in public. The crackdown follows the jailing of scrounger Derek...

# OUTRAGE OVER COSTA DEL DOLE NATIONAL HEALTH SKIVERS





## DOING IT YOUR OWN WAY

You always lose some control if you rely on others to deliver your message. The way to make sure your aims are met is to do it yourself. And that way more members of your group will be involved in putting across your ideas and not just a single 'personality' spokesperson.

We've already mentioned a lot of techniques you can use - your own newspaper, reports, demonstrations, video, tape & slides, and so on. Every issue of Community Action has examples of the ways local groups are fighting the propaganda battle - see for instance the Empty Properties poster campaign on page 4 of this issue.

Other opportunities and ways of getting your information, news and views to the people you want to reach are :

### \*\*\*\*\*

**STREET ACTIVITIES** : Street theatre - why not write your own play or suggest ideas to a street theatre group; street meetings like the ones held in Chapeltown (see p.6); door-to-door canvassing; painting slogans or pictures on walls; flyposting; leafletting shopping centres, markets, bus stations, factory gates; use sandwich boards, stunts and loud hailer to attract attention to a petition you are collecting signatures for.

### \*\*\*\*\*

**LINKING IN TO OTHER LOCAL ACTIVITIES** : Use the windows and notice boards of the local advice centre, community centre or health centre, to keep people regularly informed about the progress of your campaign; arrange to talk to meetings of other local action groups, playgroups, parent-teacher associations, Workers' Education Association classes, Old Age Pensioners' clubs, etc. Make announcements at social clubs, bingo sessions and jumble sales. Get teachers at a local school to allow the kids to do a project on an issue you are campaigning about.

### \*\*\*\*\*

**MAKE USE OF THE EXISTING LOCAL NETWORKS** : Ask the Trades Council, tenants' federation, union branches, community newspapers to include your own information or leaflets in their own mailing or distribution. Use the local network of everyday contacts : chat to the publican, shopworkers, lollipop lady/man etc.

### \*\*\*\*\*

You can probably think of lots of other ways of getting your message across. Each method has its advantages and its drawbacks. You need to decide which is best for your purpose at any one time.



## USING THE MEDIA

But you may decide that you need to use the established media - press, radio or TV. For instance :

- if you need to respond immediately to an attack
- if you haven't the time or resources to produce your own
- if you want to draw the Council out into the open by going to the local press
- if the national media have got onto your campaign and you need to respond at the same level.

If you do, REMEMBER :

- \* Their interest is in a 'good story', not necessarily in putting your argument across accurately and fairly.
- \* They nearly always have control over what they print or broadcast, not you.
- \* Your message is apt to be sensationalised or trivialised or the most important points cut out : a few words cut, for instance, from a tape for a radio show can completely distort what you said.
- \* If you're going to be included in a feature article or chat show, try to get a right of veto over what's finally printed or broadcast before you agree.

The commercially-owned media will rarely print or broadcast anything that goes against the long-term interests of their owners, or that might scare away advertisers. Many important local issues and campaigns are simply not mentioned by the local press. The BBC will be wary of anything



that they consider too 'political' or 'one-sided', and will try to 'balance' the presentation by some statement from those opposed to you. The result is that it will seem as if all arguments are equally valid, and "it's all just a matter of opinion".

## KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY

Reporters and interviewers are well practised in ways of putting questions that make people say things that they didn't mean. Or of making people look pig-headed, fanatical or ignorant. Next time you see an interviewer at work on the telly, watch his or her technique. So prepare your case first.

Make sure that your group is clear who is to talk to the media and agree on what is to be said. And that you've made arrangements for someone to report the results of your meeting the same night - while it's still 'news'.

That said, a couple of tips which can help you in getting your message through the established media:

- \* get to know a reporter for the local newspaper or radio station. You will often find someone who will be fairly sympathetic and is a useful contact when you want to say something quickly to the press.
- \* A good way of trying to control what is printed is to issue a press release. Often it will be printed exactly as you write it or in a shortened version. Examine the way news stories are written and write what you want to say clearly and simply, with the important point or striking fact first. Put in some quotes (It helps reporters pretend they have interviewed you!).
- \* Ring the paper and find out their copy deadline and get your story there on time.
- \* Newspaper letter columns are unreliable, and are unlikely to attract much attention unless the paper happens to want to publicise your point of view.
- \* Radio phone-in programmes reach a large audience, but you have to be very clear about what you want to say. Many people who ring in are made to sound pretty foolish.

## ALTERNATIVES

The established media are not of course the only existing outlets for getting your message across. The newspapers of left political groups will often print stories about the struggles of working-class people that the commercial press ignore. Union newspapers and news-letters will often be good ways of getting through to the people you want to reach. You can often get ideas spread and shared through the newsletters of other tenants' associations and community groups and many areas

and towns now have good community newspapers and magazines run by local people. Most of these papers will be happy to print stories on local issues and campaigns, undistorted by the interests of the commercial press. However, you should make sure you're clear on how far they are prepared to back your cause and are certain that the paper is read by the people you want to reach. And don't forget Community Action - we'd like to hear from you and help you share news, information and experience with other groups.

## WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

### VIDEO : CONTACTS/INFORMATION :

Fantasy Factory : independent video editing centre.  
42 Theobalds Rd, London WC1X.8NW. (01-405-6862)

Association of Video Workers : (London Region)  
Secretary, Simon Partridge, 18 Wyatt Rd, London N5.2JU. (01-359-2516)

Basic Video and Community Work : Inter-Action Advisory Service. From 14 Talacre Rd, London NW.5 Ring 01-267-1422 for price.

### SLIDE & TAPE :

Slide/Tape Kit for Classroom & Community : Published by the Directory for Social Change, 14 Saltram Cres, London W.9. Price £1 incl. post.

### PRINTING/COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS :

Community Newspapers : Inter-Action Advisory Handbook No.6. Price 50p from Inter-Action at above address.

Into Print : A Guide to Publishing Non-Commercial Newspapers and Magazines. Teach Yourself Books, price £1.45

## PREVIOUS ACTION NOTES

- ★ How to organise & run public meetings (19)
- ★ How to organise a petition (20)
- ★ Constitutions (21)
- ★ Writing a report (22)
- ★ Lobbying (24)



# CUTS CUTS.....

## THE SCENE IS SET...

In the last issue of C/A we showed how the demands for cuts were building up from bankers, MPs, brokers and others. By contrast, throughout July, Healey and Callaghan shifted the emphasis of their argument for cuts away from the demands of foreign creditors towards the need to release resources for home industry to help our "recovery". However, they continued to use the demands of foreign bankers and the threats to sterling as a weapon against opponents of the cuts.

Having themselves accepted that more cuts would be made, they fixed the figure "needed for industry" as £1 billion, and in a series of public statements and meetings with TUC leaders, members of the Parliamentary Labour Party and others, they 'explained' that cuts of anything less would

cause a collapse of foreign confidence in sterling. Finally, by making acceptance of the cuts a matter of survival for the government, they rounded off the issue and guaranteed the acceptance of an 'economic strategy' based on the interests of industry.

The only reason that the cuts weren't £2 billion instead of £1 billion (in order to bring the public borrowing deficit down to £9 billion as required by overseas bankers) was because of the "sop" to the Left of raising National Insurance contributions from employers. In fact, this increase in N.I. contributions will mean possibly 170,000 more jobs lost, future industrial investment will be towards capital-intensive methods, and prices will be allowed to rise to compensate the businessman.

## THE CUTS DIARY

### July 3rd

Healey tells the TUC that public sector borrowing will still have to be cut even after our economic recovery. There may still be a choice between more cuts or raising taxes, which might threaten the pay deal. Healey's pessimism over the size of public sector borrowing is in contrast to several other forecasts, including one from the EEC Commission the previous week, that it will be considerably lower than the Treasury forecast; the EEC report suggests £2.75 billion less.

### 4th

Lord Watkinson, President of the CBI, calls for a 100% increase in company trading profits and much higher salaries for management as conditions for industry's support for the government's economic policy. Stockbrokers Phillips and Drew again call for £2 billion to be cut from public spending (as on 21st June) in anticipation of demands from IMF.

### 5th

Public sector unions threaten action against any cuts. Tribune group sees Healey.

### 6th

Healey claims that cuts would be the result of the domestic economy rather than foreign bankers.

### 7th

Callaghan gives his clearest warning yet

that a new round of cuts will begin, to reduce public sector borrowing.

### 8th

Association of Metropolitan Authorities questions the figure of £350-£450 million 'overspending' by Councils (as forecast at end of May).

CBI requests at least another £200 million "relief" under the Price Code, in addition to the changes of a week ago which should add £800 million to company profits and £1000 million to retail prices.

### 12th

The Cabinet starts to consider details of cuts. The £1 billion (i.e. £1000million) figure is clearly being bandied about to test reaction, in particular abroad.

Labour's Home Policy Committee presented with an economic review by the Labour Party research department which asserts that another £1 billion cuts would hardly affect public sector borrowing, and reduce the balance of payments deficit by under £200 million a year. Healey accused of ignoring these views.

Healey tells Tribune group that further cuts will be needed, to provide more resources for industry. He hints that these cuts will be the last.

A report from Cambridge states that the public sector deficit could be eliminated in 3 or 4 years if unemployment were reduced to 650,000 and kept at that level, as £3½ to £3¾ billion of the deficit is the result of the recession.

Jack Jones (TGWU leader) warns that further cuts could threaten the 'social contract'.



# & MORE CUTS



I JUST DO AS  
I'M TOLD

and alternative economic arguments. The TUC Economic Committee expresses opposition to the cuts but won't mount any concrete opposition for fear of jeopardising the 'social contract' and the Labour Govt.

## 20th

Healey and Callaghan warn the Parliamentary Labour Party that additional demands from several Ministries will mean cutbacks above the figure of £1 billion.

Unemployment hits a new postwar record of 1,460,000.

## 21st

2 Cabinet meetings. Healey says he may raise taxes at a future date if this round of cuts fails to win the confidence of overseas creditors.

Lord Watkinson (CBI President) refuses to encourage employers to boost investment unless cuts of over £1 billion are imposed.

## 22nd The cuts

£1,012 million cut from public spending, including £60m on debt interest. Cuts include:

### HOUSING

Council housebuilding slashed (see p 12 and 13) in addition, £146m cut from local authority mortgage lending.

### EDUCATION

£45m off building programmes, and school meal prices increased 10p.

### HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

£70m cuts - partly building programmes, partly increased charges for things like dental services.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

£81m off public amenities and services (besides housing), e.g. parks, street cleaning, etc.

### NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES

£157m off capital investment (i.e. public industry cuts to finance private industry).

### OTHER CUTS

Defence - £100m spending deferred- N. Ireland - £35m; Government accommodation - £10m; Overseas spending - £5m "savings"; Food subsidies - £80m; Agriculture and Forestry - £25m; Roads - £87m;

## 14th

Healey and Callaghan meet Parliamentary Labour Party, to say that cuts are "essential" for the survival of the Labour Government. "If not .... we may face another run on sterling .... that would mean seeing the pound falling .... or spending the standby credit and loading ourselves with an additional burden of debt". This would cause still further cuts which would endanger the government, says Healey.

Healey and Callaghan meet the TUC leaders, who hint that they might accept cuts designed to transfer resources to industry, despite the threatened loss of another '70,000' jobs.

## 15th

Hugh Scanlon tells the American Chamber of Commerce in London that he won't fight too hard against any cuts. Cabinet meets to discuss cuts. Little opposition in the Commons. Howe, the shadow Chancellor, calls for cuts to be made speedily.

## 19th

Two Cabinet meetings. Environment Secretary Shore and Energy Secretary Benn claim that public statements by Healey and Callaghan have pre-empted any alternative points of view and made cuts of £1 billion inevitable anyway.

Healey sees Home Policy Committee but pays little attention to requests to consider import controls



Also, employers contributions to National Insurance increased from April 1977 to yield about £910m in 1977-78.

Healey, despite his actions, recognises that the "needs of the people are almost inexhaustible in health, housing and many other fields". The Tories however call for more cuts and leader Thatcher states that these cuts won't satisfy foreign confidence and more will need to be made in October and November. Callaghan hopes that local authorities will reduce their staff as well as their services.

## 25th

Speculation that the IMF will require a further reduction of the government's borrowing requirement, making more cuts in 1977-78 necessary.

Leading economists and unions estimate that 170,000 more jobs will be lost due to the latest cuts.

## 27th

Following several days of assault on council spending in the press, Environment Secretary Shore meets Local Authority Leaders to discuss their 'overspending', in an attempt to agree a figure and get it reduced.

## 28th

Labour Party National Executive approves final draft of social contract by 13 to 11. Benn hides in his office to avoid confronting the Government and losing his job.

Healey tells Association of County Councils that £250 million cuts must be made by Councils if they are to keep their autonomy. He adds that the Government will not continue compelling councils to spend money by passing legislation. Treasury's deputy chief economic advisor admits the cuts package could cause 80,000/90,000 jobs to be lost by early 1978. He rejects figures of 110,000 or more, based on previous statements by Employment Secretary Albert Booth. But an economist advises the government that 1 million new jobs must be created in 1978/79 to reach 700,000 registered unemployed in 1979, the government's target.

## 30th

CBI call off their proposals to boost industrial investment.

All Party Commons Expenditure Committee states that Healey's package won't shift resources to industry, but is merely intended to impress foreign creditors.

## 2nd AUGUST

Government gets a majority of 12 for the cuts; left-wing opposition in Parliament fizzles out.

## 4th

Shore announces strict new measures to penalise Council 'overspending' - £150 million will be trimmed off next year's

rate support grant with £50 million saved on capital expenditure and £50 m on the Increase Order, an 'inflation bonus'. This will mean councils are unable to meet government-defined standards in services, and will have to make redundancies.

At National Economic Development Council, TUC and CBI leaders and the government patch up their "differences". Their "economic strategy" lives again.



## AND YET MORE CUTS!

Despite reports from all sides questioning the government's economic policies and its projections, Healey and Callaghan show no intention of listening to alternative economic proposals put forward by the groups that they met in July. Their policies were decided before they began their consultations.

The government has successfully played on the unions' oldest and greatest fear - unemployment. It has managed to push the unions into accepting its policies - or see the Tories back with even harsher economic measures. And yet Labour's own policies mean more cuts, and a virtual wage freeze to help private industry's profits and encourage re-investment. (If a Tory government had taken these same measures, would the union leaders have accepted so easily?)

## NO PUBLIC CONTROL

The nation's recovery, the government says, depends on rebuilding industry's 'confidence' to reinvest, and giving it the public money - robbed from wage packets and public service spending - to help it do so. Thus the government has awarded industry enormous tax concessions and subsidies this year with little public control over how, when or where the money is spent.

In fact it is clear that manufacturing industries now have substantial resources to invest. The Confederation of British Industry was about to tell companies to "turn on" their investment, simply by sending out a letter saying "Go!" - but instead made a big play over refusing to do so as a result of the increase of £1,000 million in employers' National Insurance contributions.

## INDUSTRY DECIDES

So the government's economic strategy of 'encouraging' private industry continues, with control over investment decisions lying with private industrialists. They will decide when to invest, where and how; they will continue to demand further cuts in public spending to 'release money for industry' and, in the present economic system, no amount of government incentives will alter this balance of power.



# FARE FIGHT

WHEN LABOUR WON CONTROL of the Greater London Council they promised to hold down Bus and Tube fares for the time being, and eventually bring in a FREE bus service and a cheap Tube service. What a joke

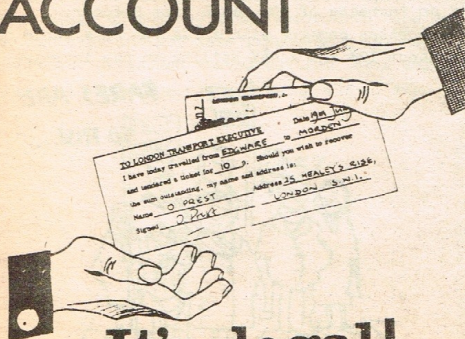
Tube fares have gone up 118% in 18 months and bus fares have gone up 113% in 12 months. But it's not just that we are having to pay gigantic fares, it's that we are getting less for what we have to pay. There have been vast cuts in the services provided in some areas. Have you tried waiting for a bus recently?

## UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE

This time, however, there has been some form of organised resistance to the increases - a campaign called Fare Fight. What you do is buy a ticket for 10p at the start of your journey and at the other end you hand in the ticket, along with a 'deferred payment slip' which says where you have travelled from and your name and address. Having the IOU slip

**fight new fares**

**OPEN A CREDIT  
ACCOUNT**



means that no one can be charged with 'Intent to avoid payment'. The idea is that the bureaucracy will be choked with more and more work to do as more and more IOU slips pour into the offices. It should take them a long time to recover the money! Letters might just happen to get lost in the post or not arrive. Eventually London Transport will be forced to use registered letters which becomes very expensive. If letter and claims are then queried, the whole process can start all over again.

TO LONDON TRANSPORT EXECUTIVE Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have today travelled from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

and tendered a ticket for \_\_\_\_\_p/ Should you wish

to recover the outstanding sum, my name and address is:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

The campaign started with 1500 posters and 6000 credit slip books, as well as leaflets explaining what to do and the legality of it all. Instructions were given out with the posters telling people how to fly-post if they hadn't done it before. This means that as well as fighting fare





increases, the campaign is also concerned with making it easier for new people with no experience of campaigns, or only a little, to get involved.

Support groups have also been started in case anybody does get any trouble at particular stations. This all helps give people the confidence to get involved.

## Free Travel

'The recent fare increases are really terrible. They mean that more and more people will be forced off London Transport, and this will mean fewer and fewer jobs. Things are bad enough already! I would like to see a free transport system so that ordinary people could use it whenever they wanted.'

(a worker on London Transport)

Ultimately what is being fought for is a free transport system that suits the needs of working-class people. Why should anybody have to pay huge fares to go to work or go shopping? And why should people have to wait HOURS because of reductions in services. The campaign is also concerned with the conditions on the tubes:

'It's not just the prices and services that are bad, but also the conditions. Tubes must be the most unhealthy places in the world. People who work on them are always complaining about their health!'

## Intimidation

The Fare Fight campaign is going much better than some London Transport reps let on. 10,000 books of slips have now gone out and 45,000 leaflets went out on the first day, all with slips attached. Coverage has been given to the campaign in the Evening Standard, Time Out and the Morning Star to name a few. About 4,000 or 5,000 people have used the slips.



There have been problems. Some stations have tried to intimidate people (especially, it seems, women with kids) and produced complicated forms to fill in. The management has also started to make ticket collectors fill in huge forms whenever they get an IOU. As usual, the bosses make the

people at the bottom take all the pressure and complaints and the people who are really to blame get off free.

The pressure groups have 'visited' the stations concerned to clear up any problems and now local groups are being set up which are responsible for a particular station. The more people get involved, the fewer problems will occur and the easier it will be to cope with them once they do arise.

The campaign is also trying to make links with other groups who are fighting against the cuts, as well as with London Transport workers. The idea has been suggested recently that Fare Fight try to hold a conference of all those people involved in direct action against transport cuts.

We would like to hear from anyone who might be interested in this. (Contact Mark Rusher via Community Action, or ring 01-790-9965.)  
Fare Fight: Flat 3, 76 Sidney Street, London E1.

## BUS CUTS & FARE INCREASES

'First, the most important thing that we must deal with is the problem of getting to work. It is this, particularly in London and other great cities, that poses the most intricate problem, presenting our diminishing transport fleets with a tidal wave of users and jamming the road with private car commuters... We shall maintain public transport services in our towns and cities and aim at higher levels of comfort and frequency.' (Labour Party Manifesto, 1966)

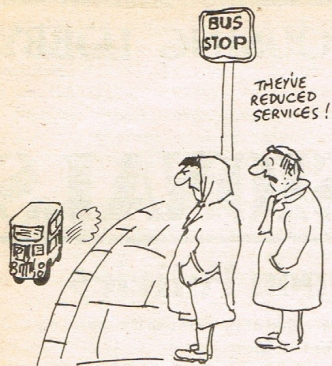
Our bus service has been in decline for years. Higher fares have meant fewer passengers; more cars have meant more congestion, and more congestion has meant an irregularity in services.

## Up by 26%

London Transport estimate that the June 20th increases will mean a loss of 184 passenger miles. The recent rises were over 26% - and came on top of an increase of 50% since last October. These rises compare with inflation as a whole now at about 12% and a 4½% ceiling on pay increases.







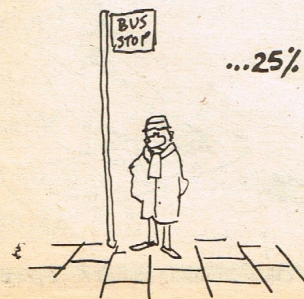
'It's only by the public and the bus workers getting together that we are going to get anywhere.' (Alan Jones, Walthamstow Bus Garage)

THE WALTHAMSTOW GARAGE workers say: Don't pay the increase. The local Trades Council has promised to pay the fine of anybody who does fight them.

'We may not hold down the fares this time, but I believe if we can show substantial support against these increases, then we'll be better off to fight next time.'



Two London bus garages went on strike against the first stage of the new cuts. Wandsworth came out for two days and got some improvement in their schedules. Willesden stayed out for three days and managed to stop their rotas being cut in two.



This strike worried LT a bit because the workers were campaigning for support and giving out leaflets outside the garage. Many of them kept talking about what happened in Italy in 1968 when people refused to pay increases and occupied the buses they travelled on.

## Yorks Fares Held

SOUTH YORKSHIRE is one area which has kept bus fares down. The result - 'An unexpected but welcome increase in bus fare revenue' and more passengers. South Yorks fares are the lowest in the country, and the county is the ONLY one to show a revenue increase last year.

The large fare increases in early 1975 show that higher fares mean fewer passengers. Doncaster and Rotherham, where fares used to be cheaper than most, put their fares up steeply - and the number of passengers dropped steeply.

Sheffield is at the moment resisting fare increases and let's hope it continues to do so. Low fares are popular, fairer and more likely than not, economical.

## Road Lobby

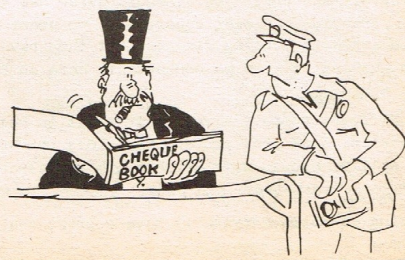
AT LEAST HALF the families in Britain don't own a car. Kids and the elderly are particularly dependent on bus services.

So why are public transport services cut and car owners pandered to? A major part of the answer lies in the strength of the 'Road Lobby'. This is one of the strongest lobbies in Parliament as the recent report on it, 'Wheels within Wheels' made clear. The Road Lobby includes the British Road Federation, the AA and the RAC, and is dedicated to the destruction of public transport which they see as a threat to the private profits made out of cars, oil and petrol, road building, and so on. This lobby has forced huge amounts of money to be spent on road building rather than public transport. Between 1964 and 1972 spending on housing rose by 66% and spending on roads by - 196% (see C/A no.15,p28 for more information on the road lobby).

CARTOONS FROM 'PLATFORM', the paper for Passenger Transport Workers.

NO BUS CUTS stickers costing 25p per hundred from Platform, 8, Buller Rd, London N17 9BH

## PASSENGER OF THE FUTURE: THE ONE MAN BUS





# INVESTIGATION OF THE HOUSING LOBBY

## Part 2

# 'THE PROFESSIONALS'

EACH OF THE HOUSING 'PROFESSIONS' has its own national organisation working as a pressure group on behalf of its members. These professions include estate agents, valuers, surveyors, architects, planners, housing managers and City Treasurers. They span private practice, local government and central government. The professional institutes, like the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountants (CIPFA), together make up the 'professional' wing of the housing lobby.

## Privilege

The Institutes have the privilege of extensive membership of Government housing advisory committees, like the Housing Finance Review Committee or the Committee on Social Ownership. And they serve as housing advisers to the main local government organisations, like the Association of District Councils.

Within the 'private sector' of housing, the professions do not operate alone, they share the same interests as the organisations acting on behalf of the builders and construction firms, like the Federation of Master Builders or the National Federation of Building Trades Employers, which we examined in the last issue of Community Action. The professions enjoy the same privileged access to Government. And they have much the same housing policies.

## Influence

To show how they are able to influence government housing policy we examine the membership of one of the key public bodies examining housing policy - the Economic Development Council for the Building Industry. The EDC is having difficulty reaching agreement on a report to the Government's Housing Finance Review Committee, mainly because of the extreme views being pushed by the professionals on the Committee.

The Government's Housing Finance Review has given the professions an open opportunity to press for the changes in housing finance that they have long been pushing for. So we concentrate here on their main proposals.

The professions have a vested interest in home ownership. Last year professional fees for buying and selling houses were worth £250m to valuers, surveyors, solicitors and estate agents. So their housing policies inevitably have a great deal in common:

## Common Policies

- reduce the subsidies for public housing
- sell council houses
- higher rents - for private and council tenants
- more home ownership.

These policies stem naturally from the role of these institutes to protect and to further their members' business interests.



Royal Town Planning  
Institute



C.I.P.F.A.

The professions cultivate their image of being 'experts', which gives them an 'impartial' point of view elevated above political wrangling. They live off the myth that there can be technical solutions to problems like housing, "if you'd only listen to us", and keep politics out of it.

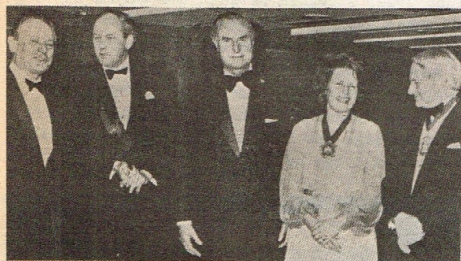
These institutes are of course solidly middle class. Behind their smooth professional image lies a heavy and well-funded political commitment to free market housing and business-oriented housing policies.





The institutes employ full-time research and public relations staff, paid for out of members fees. For example, the RICS has 160 HQ and regional staff. Their reports and press releases are distributed widely to the press, TV, radio and the other professional journals - see chart. As professional organisations which 'have to be listened to', they can guarantee wide publicity.

The institutes have annual conferences with 'prestige' guest speakers, regional committees and local branches. They liaise nationally and locally with other professionals and meet in different formal and informal settings from the Rotary Club to Chamber of Commerce with the builders and contractors with whom they have common business interests. And they rub shoulders on the same national Government advisory committees, where they meet the civil servants and Ministers around a table and less formally for chats.



Institute of Quantity Surveyors  
His Grace the Duke of Devonshire, PC, MC, the Chancellor of the University of Manchester, Sir Maurice Laing, Chairman John Laing Construction Limited, James Franks, FIQS, AIArb, AMBIM, MIOB (President) and Frank Gee, FRICS, AIQS (Branch Chairman) were the distinguished speakers at the Annual Dinner of the Manchester Branch

## PUBLIC SERVANTS ?

CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountants) is the voice of the professionals who actually administer public sector housing finance. It is probably the most powerful professional organisation within the housing lobby. Its members include City Treasurers and Finance Directors and civil servants at the Department of the Environment.

CIPFA members act as advisors on housing finance to local authority associations. CIPFA has a reputation for 'impartiality' with the Government. So what, as public servants, did CIPFA recommend to the Housing Finance Review when it was invited to submit evidence?

- \* council tenants "could pay increased rents without hardship".
- \* "The sale of council housing should be re-examined, as this could yield financial advantages to housing authorities...as well as enabling persons who would otherwise remain tenants to become owner-occupiers."
- \* "equity sharing" should be encouraged.

CIPFA's underlying belief in the free market in housing is that of the Conservative Party itself: "there is no reason why housing should not be treated the same as other commodities". Nowhere in the report do the public servants on CIPFA point out the value and achievements of public housing. But then CIPFA is on record as describing the 1972 Housing Finance Act as a "step forward".

CIPFA runs a major financial service for local authorities - the "Loans Bureau". The Bureau arranges loans on behalf of public authorities with City Banks and other commercial sources of

## Professional Institutes in the Housing Lobby

	ORGANISATION	MEMBERS	FULL-TIME STAFF	JOURNAL	MEMBERSHIP
<b>CIPFA</b>	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy	6000	60	Public Finance and Accountancy	Finance Directors of councils & public bodies
<b>ISVA</b>	Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers	8000	20	The Valuer	estate agents and auctioneers
<b>RICS</b>	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors	50,000	160	The Surveyor	planners, surveyors, valuers, rating surveyors, estate agents
<b>RTPI</b>	Royal Town Planning Institute	10,000*	24	The Planner	council, private and Government
<b>IQS</b>	Institute of Quantity Surveyors	9000	20	The Quantity Surveyor	private & council surveyors
<b>IHM</b>	Institute of Housing Managers	5000	8	Housing Monthly	council housing department staff
<b>IME</b>	Institute of Municipal Engineers	10,000	25*	The Municipal Engineer	mostly public service engineers
<b>RIBA</b>	Royal Institute of British Architects	22,000	160	RIBA Journal	council and private architects and surveyors

\* estimate



money. To the City, the Bureau provides a convenient access to councils needing to borrow private capital to pay for public services - like housing.

The Governor of the Bank of England used the last CIPFA annual conference to call for more cuts in local authority spending (we reported this in C/A no.26, p.31). As City Treasurers and Finance Officers, CIPFA members have considerable influence in deciding what to cut, and how much, as the Governor knows.

## ESTATE AGENTS SPEAK UP

JOHN PORTER, THE NEW PRESIDENT of the ISVA (The Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers), in his speech to the Institute's annual conference, pledged that this year the Society will be more "assertive". Faced with legislation like the Community Land Act, he asked, "can this Society remain silent, maintaining a non-political posture?".

The ISVA submission to the Government's Housing Finance Review attacked:

- \* the "increase in state control" of housing, requiring massive subsidies;
- \* the 1974 Rent Act and the Community Land Act - all working, according to ISVA, to create a situation which cannot be overcome except by "a return to the open market".

ISVA has objected to tighter control over estate agency practices (see Prebbles demonstration, Islington estate agents, C/A no.20)

ISVA liaises with the RICS on common issues like fees. It is seeking a Royal Charter, and the increased respectability that goes with it.

## WHO SITS ON LITTLE NEDDY?

HOW DO THE INSTITUTES make their views on housing known on public committees? And how do these committees work? Here we look at the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the work of the Economic Development Committee for the Building Industry - the so-called 'Little Neddy'.

The RICS's own major study of housing finance is still secret and will be published in September. But 3 key policies will emerge:

- \* the sale of council housing to be closely examined;
- \* public sector rent levels to be reviewed;
- \* rent levels generally should rise.

The Building EDC is a prestigious public body with 26 members officially representing the Unions, Government and private industry. When he was Secretary of State, Crosland kept a close eye on it - as any Neddy report has to be taken very seriously.

The EDC set up a 'Housing Strategy Committee' to produce a report to the Government's housing re-

view. The RICS has 2 of its members sitting on this committee in what the RICS claims is a 'personal capacity'. Nevertheless its 2 members send any papers going to the Committee to the RICS for comments beforehand.

One paper to the Committee, from RICS member and private surveyor Mr Edwards, attacked as "counter-productive" the Community Land Act and the "high rate" of Development Land Tax. The subsidy to owner occupiers did "not really cost the taxpayer much". And, "all rented properties should be free of control in 5-10 years, to allow an investor a "normal return on capital".

No doubt these statements are a further indication of the forthcoming RICS proposals, already being aired on Neddy.

## Power Struggle

The Housing Strategy Committee can't reach agreement on its housing strategy, and is locked in a 3-sided power struggle between the Unions wanting more public housing, the professions and the building interests wanting more home ownership and, some at least, of the civil servants looking for ways to cut public expenditure. They have received 55 papers and outside reports from organisations like the Building Societies Association (see last issue of C/A).

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
FOR  
BUILDING  
Housing Strategy Committee

Following the leak to the Guardian of some of the consumer survey results, papers will in future be distributed only to full members of the Committee

The Committee has no council tenants on it (and 19 owner-occupiers) so it commissioned a 'consumer survey' from the British Market Research Bureau. To their embarrassment the 'confidential' report was leaked to the Guardian by the Building Societies Association. It found that 30% of council tenants wanted to buy homes of their own. The survey cost £20,000, partly paid for by the Government, partly by Bambergers (Timber and Plywood) Ltd, a committee member.

Another Committee member, Joe Rogaly (journalist with the Financial Times) submitted a paper strongly approving of the survey results - "owner occupation should be the starting point for our deliberation". One third of council homes should be sold.

So the Committee lumbers on, into yet another controversial draft, inevitably claiming that house purchase is the "preference" for one third of council tenants, public housing is "too heavily subsidised", and rent restriction on landlords must be lifted. The report's title is 'Housing For All', but the sub-title is more appropriate - 'At a price we can afford'.



## Housing Strategy Committee

### PROFESSIONS

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors(2)  
Royal Institute of British Architects  
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and  
Markbys(solicitors) Accountancy  
Moor Associates(Planning consultants)  
National Housing Council

### BUILDERS AND MATERIALS FIRMS

New Ideal Homes Ltd  
McLeans Ltd  
S & S Holdings  
Bambergers (Timber and Plywood) Ltd.  
Federation of Specialists and Subcontractors

### PUBLIC BODIES

Dept of the Environment  
Housing Associations(3)  
London Boroughs Association

'Neddy' (2)

### UNIONS

UCATT  
TUC

### PRESS

Financial Times

## PLANNERS WANT FREEDOM

where housing should be built and the public/private mix. In a key paper to the Royal Town Planning Institute's annual conference in May, Francis Amos, ex-president and now Chief Executive, City of Birmingham, stated:

"public housing has always been for that section of society which could not independently secure its own accommodation."

However, he went on to say that solutions to the housing problem lay with the "open market". But most disturbing of all, Amos argued strongly for housing cuts - "there are problems more urgent and critical for investment than housing" - eg. industry. This argument was endorsed by the RTPI President. So at the top of the planning profession and in the Institute the cuts are accepted and will dutifully be administered.

THE INVESTIGATION INTO the Housing Lobby will continue in the next issue of Community Action.

### PART I COMMUNITY ACTION No 26

The Building Societies  
The Construction Firms

### PART 2 THIS ISSUE

The Professionals

## COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS

In the last issue of Community Action we featured an article on community health councils, the newly set up community organisations which are supposed to give the public a far bigger say in the running of the National Health Service.

In a new book, 'CHCs in Action' by Jack Hallas, the first attempty at a national review of CHCs work is published.

The book suggests that the major task of the Councils over the next few years is to make the public aware of the change in emphasis in health care which was brought about by the re-organisation of the health service in 1974. Yet Jack Hallas onits to point out that 90% of health service administrators still think in terms of "the hospital service" which accounts for most of the £5,000 million we spending annually on health. So the Councils first task must be to remind the bureaucrats in the NHS that they should be aiming to provide a health service based on the principle of community needs, even if this conflicts with existing patterns of health care.

### Health decisions are political decisions

Jack Hallas points out that the CHCs should help to change the attitudes of the community towards the health services, and that good health is not

just something that is provided by the NHS. Decisions about health care are basically political and CHCs must be prepared "to bring a political attitude more firmly into the health care picture". This is a crucial point when many CHCs are stating that "they don't want to bring politics into the NHS" - a naive and simplistic attitude which fools nobody.

The author outlines the disturbing tendency of Councils to organise on a regional basis rather than at a more local level. Even though he supports the moves towards a National Council he emphasises the importance of organising at neighbourhood level. He criticises the fact that many Councils have opened offices in the same



continued on next page.



# REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REF

**THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY IN LEEDS** by Ron Wiener.  
20p + 15p post from 16 Methley Tce, Leeds 7.

2,000 engineering jobs have been lost in Leeds in the past 2½ years. This report came out of a course for engineering workers in Leeds sponsored by Leeds University and WEA. It examines who owns Leeds' engineering industry, and why it is in decline. Intended as analysis for use in re-thinking union policy to enable local action to stop the rundown of local industry because of national and international pressure.

**WHAT PRICE FUEL?** by Chris Tinder and Steve Clark. 30p + 15p post from British Association of Settlements, 7 Exton Street, London SE1 8UE.

BAS's reply to the Department of Energy report on "Energy Tariffs and the Poor". Argues that government used unsatisfactory and out-of-date data and argues that a much wider perspective - the social and economic implications of fuel pricing policy - is required.

## CRIMINAL TRESPASS

News from the Campaign Against A Criminal Trespass Law - what the TUC are and aren't doing, how the Tory Government paved the way, list of local contacts. CACTL Newsletter No.2, 5p + post from 6 Bowden St, London SE11 (01-289 3877).

## COMMUNITY PLAN

An attempt by a postgraduate student to involve a group of local people in preparing their own local Area Plan. Covers housing, employment, shopping, etc, and may give some useful pointers to groups wishing to do the same for their own locality. Middleport Community Plan 30p + 14p post from 9 Bower Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3BH.

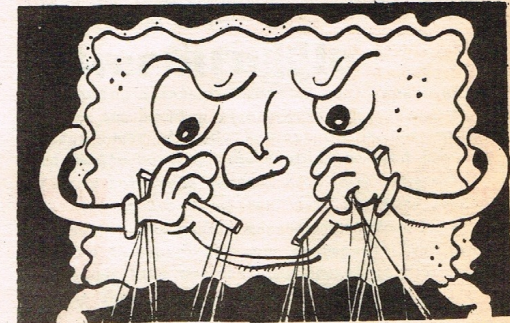
## HOUSING IMPROVEMENT HANDBOOK

A Self-Help Approach for Residents Groups £1.50 plus 50p postage from Jo Bloor, 9 Queenston Road, Manchester 20.

This 170 page, A4 size handbook explains and offers suggestions, in plain language, on how residents can get together and set about organising an improvement programme for themselves. It describes ways of forming and running an action group, the technical and political processes involved in getting improvement, how to set up a housing co-operative and where to go for technical help. Excellent value for any group in areas of private housing, it effectively manages to de-mystify much of the technical jargon.

**CANNING TOWN'S DECLINING COMMUNITY INCOME**  
from GDP, 57 Barking Road, London E16.  
(01- 511 0931)

Looks at the effects of the loss of 24,000 jobs and industrial decline and calculates that the community's collective income is now 10% lower than it would otherwise have been. Examines the activities of Tate and Lyle in detail.



## WOMEN'S HOUSING

Comprehensive and well-researched report on women's inferior status in the housing market and specialist guide to women's housing rights. Concentrates on Clydeside, but much of the information applies generally in Scotland. Women and Housing, 20p + post from Glasgow Women's Legal and Financial Independence Group, 53 St Vincent Crescent, Glasgow.

## COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS

continued from page 37.

building as the health authority; and he outlines the danger that this is likely to lead many people to see them as part of the system, not a counter-weight to it.

As we showed in the last issue, there are 229 community health councils, one in each health district, and they have up to 30 members, one third chosen by local voluntary groups, half by the local authority and the rest by the health authorities. So they offer local groups - including tenants associations, the Trades Council, womens groups, etc - the chance to have a say in improving services, fighting closures and dealing with complaints.

THANKS TO Caroline Langridge, Wandsworth and East Merton CHC, 1 Balham Station Road, London SW12 (01-673 8820).

See "CHCs in Action, Jack Hallas, 80p from Nuffield Hospitals Trust, 3 Prince Albert Road, London NW1.



## PAPER EVERYWHERE

A Conference of Alternative Papers. Leeds Other Paper are organising a conference of alternative papers in Leeds on the 15-17th of October. The aim of the conference is to discuss the practical and political problems faced by alternative papers nationally, and to improve communications between papers. Leeds have sent circulars to those papers they know about, but if you haven't got one and would like more information write to: Paper Everywhere, c/o Leeds Other Paper, 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2.

## HELP

Voluntary worker wanted for six-month-old "161" Community Centre. Hours and conditions flexible. Phone Wendy 01-520-1803 or write: 19, Palace Parade, High Street, London E17.

## Volunteer lawyers

### & others

Volunteer lawyers wanted one evening a week for free legal advice centre starting at Kings Cross.

Also general volunteers needed to help in any capacity in community centre and shop starting up selling crafts and whole food to provide an income to make community films and giving basic welfare and legal advice to people (including ex-prisoners just released from Pentonville Prison)

Please drop a line, giving your phone number to. Mark McNeil, 'Spokes', 435 Caledonian Road, London N.7.

## Workers Wanted

Workers wanted for a neighbourhood centre in a multi-racial area. Academic qualifications not necessary but practical skills, driving license or knowledge of Gujarati an advantage. Salary £1,650 under review. Accommodation available. Further details ring Leicester 668331 or write to Self Help Project, 65, Melton Rd, Leicester LE4 6PN.

## Citizen's Rights Worker

Barrowfield Citizen's Rights Centre Group are looking for a second worker to establish our community/rights work in a grossly deprived estate. Commitment to an activist approach to work with individuals and groups essential. Further details from: J.R. Stevenson, 142 Crownpoint Road, Glasgow G40 2AE.

## community workers

SWAT (Shelter Westminster Action Team) needs two housing community workers: 1 to work on housing finance issues with tenants associations and community groups; 1 to work in the Saltram-Marban housing stress area of north Paddington, which includes potential Housing Action Areas. £3000 p.a. Closing date September 16. Details and application forms - SWAT, 29 Croxley Road, London W.9 - or phone 01-969-7437 or 834-2868.

## and ...

Pimlico Neighbourhood Aid Centre : Community worker wanted. Ring or write for details to: PNAC 6, Longmoore St. London SW1. Tel. 01 828 8172

## REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REF

EMPLOYMENT IN SOUTHWARK: A Strategy for the Future by Southwark Trades Council and Colin Roberts (Southwark Community Development Project). 50p + post from S.T.C. 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5 8JA.

Starting from a brief statement of national/London employment trends, provides a comprehensive analysis of industrial change in Southwark where 40,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since 1961. Makes proposals to stop Southwark becoming even more of "an economic and social graveyard" and to stop the growth of "the unproductive financial sector that has squeezed out productive industry". Demands more direct intervention from central and local government to prevent loss of manufacturing jobs.

THE BATLEY WELFARE BENEFITS PROJECT by J. Bradshaw P. Taylor Gooby and R. Lees. £1 from CDP Central Research Unit, Department of Social Administration, University of York, York YO1 5DD.

The report of Batley Community Development Project's attempts to increase the take-up of means-tested benefits. Despite considerable effort the experiment was unsuccessful, and the report demonstrates that whatever efforts are made means-tests will remain ineffective. Argues that the best way forward is administrative integration of means-tests by central and local government, so that claimants are automatically assessed for all benefits.



## DIRECT ACTION & THE POLICE

3 issues for 55p (inc.post)

A three part report on the laws which affect direct action by tenants and community groups and the role of the police in trying to control it.

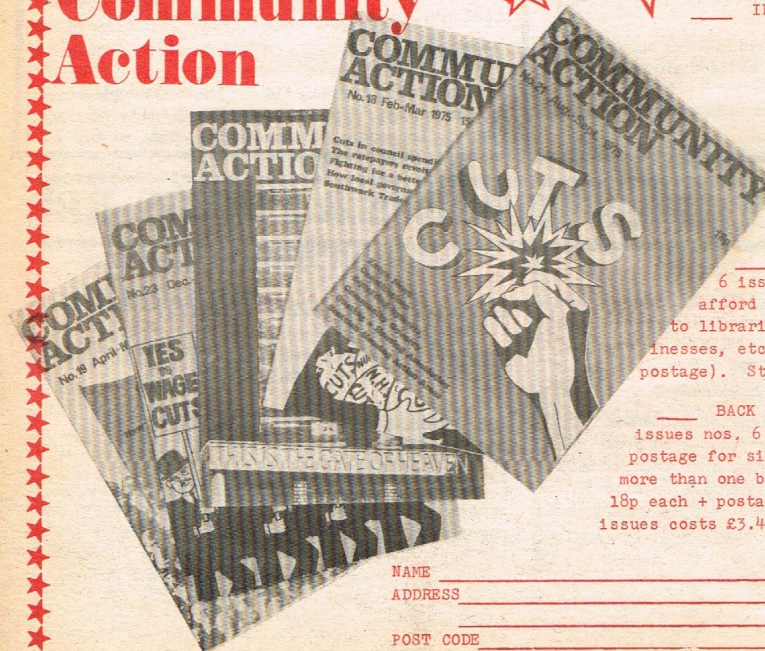
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A Cut above the Tories (21): the background of the cuts; what they are; campaigns and reactions against them; how to find out about cuts in your area. Counter Attack (22): the growing resistance to the cuts; why the city wants them; a summary of government circulars cut timetable; campaign roundup. Profit and Loss in the Cuts Account (23): the relationship between cuts, wage restraint and unemployment; what's behind the economic crisis; who profits and who loses; points to help determine tactics for action.

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